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the Straight story

A Screenplay

JOHN ROACH & MARY SWEENEY

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THE STRAIGHT STORY

Mary Sweeney & John Roach


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THE STRAIGHT STORY

A SCREENPLAY

BY

Mary Sweeney & John Roach

 HYPERION

NEW YORK



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FIRST EDITION

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

B U D

I'm goin' over there.

He lets the door close and heads off down the street. Another man, SIG, late 60's, 6'0", 265 lbs., in bib overalls and a seed cap, comes out the bar door holding a long-neck beer bottle and watches Bud walk away.

S I G

We're waitin'.

CUT TO:

6 EXT.—DAY LAURENS RESIDENTIAL STREET 6

Bud is striding down the street past small and weatherbeaten houses. The yards are mowed and dotted with lawn chairs and picnic tables. He approaches the house we saw earlier. He turns up the walkway, reaches the front door and starts knocking somewhat angrily.

B U D

Alvin! Alvin Straight!

CUT TO:

7 EXT.—DAY THE NEIGHBOR'S YARD 7

Dorothy doesn't move a muscle when she hears the knocking. She yells across the yard to Bud.

D O R O T H Y

Rose left a couple of hours ago.

CUT TO:

8 EXT.—DAY SMALL HOUSE 8

Bud jumps. He hadn't seen Dorothy until she spoke.

B U D

Did you hear me hollerin' for Rose? I'm
not lookin' for Rose.

D O R O T H Y

I ain't seen Alvin today.

B U D

Did I ask....

Bud stops for a look at Dorothy who still has the eye
protectors on. He shakes his head in exasperation.
He resumes knocking on the door.

B U D

Straight.....you're late!!

Not getting any response he heads around to the
backyard and finds no one. He goes up to the back
door and starts knocking.

B U D (cont'd)

Alvin?!

CUT TO:

9 INT.—DAY KITCHEN

9

From inside the darkened kitchen we see Bud
through the door window, knocking.

B U D

What the hell Alvin!

At a break in his knocking on the door we hear an
off-camera voice.

A L V I N

Come on in Bud.

Bud, startled, reaches down, opens the door and enters. He stands blinking and flustered, letting his eyes adjust to the darkened room.

B U D

Where the hell are you Alvin? I can't see a damn thing.

A L V I N

I'm right here Bud...watch your step.

Bud's eyes adjust and he follows the sound of Alvin's voice to the kitchen floor right at his feet. ALVIN STRAIGHT is stretched out on the floor. He is in his 70s, a lean man, weathered face, bald with a full, scruffy white beard. He is wearing a plaid cotton shirt, worn jeans and black cowboy boots. There is a wooden cane lying on the floor next to him.

B U D

What the hell's goin' on? What in god-damn hell are you doin' on the floor Alvin? What'r ye nuts? You're supposed to be down at Davmar's one hour ago.

At this point a shadow falls on them and Dorothy fills the door frame.

D O R O T H Y

What's going on....

She sees Alvin on the floor.

D O R O T H Y (cont'd)

(panicking)

Oh my god Alvin!

ALVIN
(with resignation)

Hey there Dorothy.

Dorothy makes a beeline for the phone, and picks it up.

BUD
What the hell are you doin'?

DOROTHY
(breathlessly)

What's the number for 911?

Bud rolls his eyes.

ALVIN
(with authority)

Dorothy, put that phone down.

She doesn't move. Her face flushed, bosom heaving, she looks back and forth between Alvin, Bud and the phone. Bud strides over to her and yanks the phone out of her hand.

BUD
I gotta call the bar and tell them we're not comin'.

Dorothy grabs the phone back, wild-eyed.

DOROTHY
Bud Heimstra are you crazy? We have a stricken man here.

Bud hesitates and looks over at Alvin, assessing his condition.

B U D

You stricken Alvin?

Dorothy starts dialing.

A L V I N (cont'd)

Dorothy, PUT THAT PHONE
DOWN!

Dorothy hesitates. Bud tries to wrestle the phone from her. We hear the front door slam and Dorothy and Bud freeze. Rose enters the kitchen from the front of the house.

R O S E

Dad? What's all the.....yelling?

She stops short. She takes in the scene...Bud and Dorothy at the phone and her dad on the floor.

R O S E (cont'd)

What have you.....done to my dad?

B U D

Oh for cry aye.

R O S E

Dad?.....are you.....?

Rose starts to cry.

A L V I N

(exasperated but forcefully)

I just need some help gettin' up.

CUT TO:

We see Rose helping Alvin get out of the passenger side of their car. Once standing, Alvin won't move. Rose is tugging on his arm. He is not budging and he's shaking his head.

ALVIN

I'm not goin'.

ROSE

Dad.....

ALVIN

I'm not goin'.

ROSE

Dad....you promised me.

After a pause Alvin nods.

ALVIN

Alright Rosie.

They slowly make their way across the hot parking lot to the Doctor's office.

CUT TO:

OMIT SCENES 11, 12, & 13.

CUT TO:

14 INT.—DAY EXAMINING ROOM

The nurse and Alvin enter the examining room. She turns to him and hands him a robe.

NURSE

O.K. Mr. Straight, you need to take off

all your clothes except your underwear
and put this robe on.

ALVIN
(gruffly)

Just bring me the doctor.

CUT TO:

15 INT.—DAY DOCTOR'S RECEPTION, LATER 15
Rose is standing in front of a series of bird paintings.

ROSE
I see you like birds. I build.....bird-
houses.....for bluebirds.

NURSE
Oh, that's nice.

ROSE
Yah.....Pete sells my birdhouses.....at
the.....Ace.

NURSE
Oh...I'll look for them next time I'm
in.

CUT TO:

16 INT.—DAY EXAMINING ROOM 16
Alvin leans against the examining table as he pulls
his pants to a close and fastens his belt. He is shirt-
less. His skin hangs loosely off his rib cage. He has a

serious farmer's tan: lily white chest and shoulders and arms with nut brown face, neck and hands. A middle-aged DOCTOR GIBBONS is standing looking over some notes.

DOCTOR GIBBONS

So you're not sure just how long you were on the floor?

ALVIN

(shaking his head)

I remember my cane slippin'...and losing my balance....

(he pauses, concentrating)

...next thing I knew Bud Heimstra was banging on my kitchen door.

The doctor nods at this account and writes something in his notes. Alvin sits on the examining table and looks around. He takes in the foreign room: bright fluorescent lights, slick pastel Formica surfaces, matching pastel framed art, bio-hazard warnings and medical equipment. He looks back to the Doctor and catches the man watching him with a look of concern on his face.

ALVIN (cont'd)

Somethin' the matter Doc?

The Doctor switches to an attempt at a smile.

DOCTOR GIBBONS

Listen Alvin, sometimes it's my job to tell people things they don't want to

hear. I'm concerned about you. I think you need an operation on those hips.

ALVIN

No operations.

DOCTOR

Well...this morning you fall and can't get off the floor...that's your hips Alvin. You'll have to use a walker to get around now.

ALVIN

(barks)

No walker.

DOCTOR

Fine...a second cane then. You say you're not seeing too well. That could be a diabetes-related problem. I would like to run some...

ALVIN

No!

The doctor looks back down at his notes and up at Alvin.

DOCTOR GIBBONS

I can see and hear that you smoke. I would guess you're in the early stages of emphysema. And Alvin you have circulation problems. I worry about your diet and unless you change some things

quick, there will be some serious consequences.

Alvin doesn't say anything. He just stares at the Doctor.

CUT TO:

17 INT—DAY KITCHEN

17

ALVIN sits at the kitchen table and takes a deep drag off of a Swisher Sweet. Two canes are propped up against the table. Rose looks on. She stands in the middle of the kitchen holding a birdhouse, fretfully watching Alvin. She holds the birdhouse out to him.

CUT TO:

ROSE (cont'd)

It has a.....red roof.

Alvin looks at the birdhouse and smiles at Rose.

ALVIN

That's another pretty one Rose.

He continues smoking. Rose, pleased at his response, turns smiling to do a few dishes. She sets the birdhouse down.

ROSE (cont'd)

I want to paint the.....next roof...(she blurts)...blue.

Alvin smiles again.

ALVIN

That's a good idea.

Rose turns to the window and thinks for a while

with a smile on her face. As she reflects, her smile begins to fade.

R O S E (cont'd)

What did the.....Doctor say?

Alvin puts out the Swisher Sweet.

A L V I N

Said I'm goin' to live to be a hundred.

Rose smiles at this. Alvin stands, puts on a cream-colored Stetson and heads to the back door.

A L V I N (cont'd)

Time to cut the lawn.

R O S E (cont'd)

I can.....cut it for.....you...Dad.

Alvin is navigating the door with his two canes in hand. Says gently back over his shoulder.

A L V I N

I got it sweetheart.

Rose turns, clears the table and takes dishes over to the kitchen sink. Out the window over her shoulder we see Alvin cross the backyard and mount a Rehds riding mower. She sets the dishes in the sink, then gets distracted by the birdhouse.

CUT TO:

18 EXT.—DAY ALVIN'S BACKYARD 18

Alvin tries to start the mower. No luck. He performs a slow, painful, laborious dismount. Then in a quick move he turns and bangs the mower with his cane.

ALVIN

Damn!

CUT TO:

19 INT.—DAY LAURENS ACE HARDWARE 19

A group of locals are in the store. SIG, BUD, PETE, mid-60s, 6'0", lean, gray and wearing slacks and a red Ace vest, and APPLE, early 60s, short, bald and talkative. He is wearing a short-sleeve shirt and a tie. He's concentrating on his right boot. He frowns as he works it up and down with his toes. His attention is split between working the shoe and watching the Weather Channel which is on the television over the counter.

APPLE

(all the while stomping his foot)

Looks like another low comin' out of the panhandle of Texas. That's where they all come from. You know in the winter that's where we get all our big dumps.

PETE

Apple I doubt very much if we'll be getting snow this week.

Sig giggles.

SIG

And here comes Alvin Straight. He's not movin' too well.

P E T E

Well he took that bad fall.

B U D

An hour late! I found the darn fool on the kitchen floor.

S I G

He looks like he ain't gonna make it to the door. If he was a horse they'd shoot 'im.

P E T E

(scolding)

How old are you now Sig?

Apple has his shoe off and is digging inside of it with his hand. He looks up at Pete's remark.

A P P L E

He's 70 in September... "Oh the days dwindle down to a precious few..."

S I G

You can shut up any time Apple.

Alvin enters. They turn their heads, nod hello. Bud scowls.

P E T E

Mornin' Alvin. What can I do for you?

Alvin approaches the counter and opens his mouth to speak but is interrupted by...

A P P L E

Local forecast!

CUT TO:

20 INT.—DAY HARDWARE STORE TELEVISION

20

The Weather Channel. The local forecast runs with the accompanying music. Conversation stops abruptly and they all turn to watch the local forecast together. There is the potential for thunderstorms later in the day with a possible tornado watch.

P E T E

And what can I do you for Alvin?

A L V I N

Plugs for the Rehds. Won't start.

CUT TO:

21 EXT.—LATE DAY ALVIN'S BACKYARD

21

Alvin is changing the plugs, smoking Swisher Sweets. Rose is sitting on aluminum lawn chair painting the roof of her birdhouse blue. A storm is moving in. Alvin looks up to the sky.

A L V I N

Storm comin'...not mowin' today.

CUT TO:

22 INT.—NIGHT ALVIN'S LIVING ROOM

22

Alvin and Rose are watching Storm Watch on the Weather Channel.

CUT TO:

23 INT.—NIGHT THE TELEVISION IN ALVIN'S
LIVING ROOM 23

WEATHER PERSON

Severe thunderstorm warning and tornado watch continue until 9 PM for all of west central Iowa. The National Weather Service advises seeking shelter in basement rooms. Avoid all windows...

CUT TO:

24 INT.—NIGHT ALVIN'S LIVING ROOM 24

Rose and Alvin sit by the window watching the lightning. A big bolt cuts through the sky to the ground.

ALVIN

I love a lightning storm.

ROSE

Me....too Dad.

The phone rings. Rose is reluctant to leave the show at the window and lets it ring 3 or 4 times. Finally she gets up and leaves the room to answer the phone in the kitchen.

ROSE

(off camera)

Hello.....this.....is Rose.

Yah...yah...Uncle.....Lyle?

Alvin's expression changes to a frown as the light of the TV plays off his face. He does not turn his head

or speak but he is listening and reacting to Rose's conversation.

R O S E (cont'd)

Oh.....no. When? O.K. Ah..ah..I'll tell him. Yah. O.K. bye.

Rose comes back in and sits down. She doesn't say anything and neither does Alvin for a bit. We see another big crack of lightning out the window. The Storm Watch continues off screen.

W E A T H E R P E R S O N

(voice over)

A tornado has been sited in Ida County. Sac, Calhoun and Pocahontas Counties are all under tornado watch...

R O S E (cont'd)

That was Bobby...Uncle Lyle had a....a
.....ah...stroke.

On the word "stroke," a bolt of lightning brilliantly illuminates Alvin's face. Then he sits stonefaced in darkness looking out the window. He doesn't respond.

R O S E (cont'd)

Dad?

CUT TO:

25 EXT.—NIGHT ALVIN'S HOUSE

25

Alvin's house is being buffeted by a fierce midwestern electrical storm.

CUT TO:

26 EXT.—DAY ALVIN'S YARD 26
Alvin is mowing the lawn.

CUT TO:

27 INT.—DAY ALVIN'S HOUSE, KITCHEN 27
Rose is standing at the kitchen window talking on the phone. Over Rose's shoulder Alvin crosses back and forth through the window frame riding the mower. Rose is talking to one of her brothers.

ROSE

No Bobby he....didn't say much.....They both been so.....stubborn. No.....no it was longer. I remember...It was July 7, 1988. Bobby, I always remember....the dates.

Through the window we see Alvin stop the mower. He sits and stares. He lights up a Swisher Sweet.

ROSE (cont'd)

I.....don't know...what.....he'll do.

Rose hangs up and looks back out at Alvin sitting on mower.

CUT TO:

28 INT.—NIGHT ALVIN'S LIVING ROOM 28
Rose is sitting in the dark looking out the window at the freshly mown lawn. She hears a noise and turns. There is Alvin, with two canes, silhouetted in the doorway to the kitchen.

ALVIN

Rose honey, why don't you come in here and join your dad for a cup of coffee.

Rose looks puzzled. This is not a common invitation from Alvin.

R O S E

Dad.....we're not going to move again are we? You always set me down for a coffee when you tell me we are going to move again.

Alvin laughs a little. Rose is clearly wary.

A L V I N

No honey...we're not breaking camp.

Rose sighs in relief and smiles. Alvin pauses, clearly uncomfortable.

A L V I N (cont'd)

Unless you make so many bluebird houses we run outa room.

R O S E

(taking her father seriously)

Dad..oh jeez..I can stop making them...

A L V I N

Easy honey. Your pa was just makin' a joke.

Rose is relieved. Alvin pauses and draws a breath.

A L V I N (cont'd)

Rose. I'm goin' to get back out on the road. I'm goin' to go see Lyle.

R O S E

But Dad....how are you.....?

Alvin turns and starts to hobble toward the kitchen.

A L V I N

I haven't quite figured that out yet.

He moves off into the kitchen.

CUT TO:

29 EXT.—DAY ALVIN'S BACKYARD 29

From around the side of the house comes Rose hauling a large piece of aged plywood. She talks as she wrestles with the large board. She is speaking to Alvin who is on the back stoop with a wrench and a ball joint. She is also reasoning aloud with herself.

R O S E

One...Your eyes are bad....That is why you don't drive your car because you cannot see the signs anymore.

Rose turns and looks directly at Alvin. He is letting her vent.

R O S E (cont'd)

One...Your eyes are bad.

Rose walks back around the corner of the house and returns with another large piece of old plywood. As Rose enunciates her reasons she ticks them off on her fingers.

R O S E (cont'd)

Two...Lyle is in Wisconsin which is 317

miles away. You can't take any bus straight to Mt. Zion. You'd have to stay overnight in Des Moines....and.....then there's no bus to Zion.

Rose eyes Alvin again. She vanishes around the corner one more time. Alvin continues working on the ball joint, adding oil to loosen the bolt. Rose comes around the corner again.

R O S E

Three....Your hips. You can't hardly stand for two minutes and when you do stand up after you are sitting down this is the sound you make when you stand...“aaaaaraaaaarrrrhgggg.” That is your arthritis sound.

Alvin chuckles at her impersonation of him. She is almost finished with her tasks. Her talking slows as she gets to the last of her rant.

R O S E (cont'd)

Four....You are 73 years old. You were born when Calvin Coolidge was President of America.

Rose sits down next to Alvin on the stoop. She is hot, tired, worried and upset. Her voice almost breaks as she finishes her speech.

R O S E (cont'd)

You are 73 years old.....And I can't drive you there.

ALVIN

Rosie....darlin'....I'm not dead yet.

This subdues Rose. Alvin looks at her for a beat, turns and moves to a stool with the wrench and ball joint. He begins screwing the ball joint to a beam.

ROSE

(tired and exasperated)

What are we building?

CUT TO:

30 INT.—NEXT DAY GROCERY STORE 30

Rose is pushing a grocery cart down the aisle. She checks a list in her hand.

ROSE

Coffee.

Rose places eight large cans of Folgers into the cart. She counts as she deposits them.

ROSE (cont'd)

One...two...three...four...five...six....
seven... eight.

She checks list again.

ROSE

Wieners....

Rose places several large packs of wieners in the cart.

ROSE (cont'd)

One...two...three....four...five.....six.

She reaches back into the cold meat case.

R O S E (cont'd)

Braunschweiger.

Rose makes faces in incremental disgust as she counts.

R O S E (cont'd)

One.....two.....three.....four.....

She hates braunschweiger. She checks her list again. She moves down the aisle and into the next one. She pauses before a display.

R O S E (cont'd)

Bug juice.

Rose throws insect repellent into the cart.

R O S E (cont'd)

One.

She checks her list and nods in satisfaction, heading to the checkout counter.

CUT TO:

31 INT.—DAY GROCERY STORE CHECKOUT
COUNTER

31

Rose is loading her purchases onto the counter. BRENDA the checkout girl looks on with a curious expression. Brenda is 20ish, cute, a little hefty. Very cheerful.

B R E N D A

(a statement)

Havin' a party.

Rose looks at her blankly.

R O S E

Oh.....Jeez I love parties.

B R E N D A

Yah, me too.

R O S E (cont'd)

So where's it at?

Brenda is confused.

B R E N D A

Where's what at?

R O S E

Your party.

B R E N D A

I'm not havin' a party. I thought you're havin' a party.

R O S E

I am?

B R E N D A

Well yah...look at all that braunsweiger.

R O S E

Yah it's a lot of braunschweiger.

Brenda starts to ring up the braunschweiger.

ROSE

It's for my dad.....for his.....trip. My
dad.....He...is going to.....Wisconsin.

CHECKOUT GIRL

Oh Wisconsin! A real party state.

Rose is keeping an eye on her items. She makes a
“yuk” face.

ROSE

I hate braunschweiger.

Brenda, still checking, nods in assent and makes a
sour face.

CUT TO:

32 EXT.—DAY ALVIN'S BACKYARD 32

Rose comes walking out of the house with groceries.
She sets them on the picnic table and heads back
into the house. Alvin loads the groceries into the
now finished trailer. The back door of the house
opens and a big sheet of foam rubber flies out the
door followed by Rose. She hauls it over to the trail-
er and sets it in. She fusses over its arrangement.

CUT TO:

33 INT.—DAY ACE HARDWARE 33

Pete, Sig, Apple, & Bud are in the store. They are
watching the Weather Channel. Sig has a toothpick
in his mouth. Apple is sitting on a stool. Alvin and
Rose enter.

PETE

Morning Alvin. How are you today
Rose?

Alvin nods. Rose smiles.

ROSE (BLURTS)

My.....dad....is going to see.....his
.....brother. I keep askin' him how....he's
goin' to get there.....but he doesn't
say.....nothin'.

Alvin throws a look at Rose. She smiles.

PETE

Your bluebird houses are selling well
Rose. I'm gonna need some more from
you.

SIG

Taking a trip Alvin eh?

ALVIN

Yup.

Apple is sitting on a stool with one shoe off. His
hand is inside the shoe.

APPLE

Well if you're traveling by car you
know my wife'll get those AAA trip tix.
Those babies'll tell you where every
piece of construction is all along the
"I" system.

PETE

I don't suspect Alvin'll be takin' your
wife along with him Apple.

ALVIN

Oh Lord.

BUD

You can take my wife.

Alvin chuckles and then sets one cane against the counter. With his other cane he makes his way down the store aisle to the gas cans. He grabs one 5-gallon container and heads back to the counter.

SIG

Where's your brother at Alvin?

Alvin sets the can on the counter. He turns to walk back down the aisle.

ROSE

Mt. Zion. Sixty-three miles east of the
Missi.....ssippi.

PETE

Sixty-three miles, eh Rose?

APPLE

Did you know that the Mississippi..the
old mighty Mississipp..is the single
most profitable waterway in the world?
Did you know that the Japanese har-
vest pearls outta the river down to
Prairie du Chien....pearls!

SIG

And carp.

P E T E

And walleye...need help there Alvin?

A L V I N

No thanks, Pete.

Pete and Sig exchange a glance and look at Rose.
She smiles. Alvin picks up another 5-gallon gas can.

S I G

What's doin' at your brother's Alvin?
The Straight family reunion?

Alvin gives Sig a look.

A L V I N

You could say that.

Alvin puts the other gas can on the counter.

S I G

(goads Alvin)

Alvin you got three 5-gallon cans.
Fifteen gallons of gas there. Just what
you gonna do with that much gas?

Rose is getting nervous with Sig's prying ways. She
knows that this is a sensitive area for Alvin. She
looks to the TV.

R O S E

Local forecast!

The whole gang stops and watches as the Weather
Channel gives the local forecast.

CUT TO:

The local forecast runs and the radar is looking clear.

CUT TO:

As soon as it is over they look at each other to remember where they were in conversation.

SIG

Ahh....so what you need so much gas for Alvin?

Alvin returns to the counter. This time he has two medium-sized Styrofoam coolers. Alvin stops and looks long at Sig.

ALVIN

Sig, you are one nosy sonofagun.

BUD

You got that right.

Sig clamps his jaw. Alvin turns back to Pete.

ALVIN (cont'd)

Pete, I'd like to buy that from you.

Alvin points to a contraption used in hardware stores to grab things on high shelves. Pete sees what he's pointing to and gets a possessive jolt. He turns to Alvin.

PETE

Jeez Alvin.

ALVIN

Well?

Pete eyes the grabber. He looks down the aisle to the other end of the store where he's got another grabber hanging.

P E T E

I do have two of them...I guess I could sell you that one.

A L V I N

Five bucks would seem about right.

P E T E

(puzzled)

Those things are hard to come by Alvin. It would take me two months to get another one on order. That's a damn good grabber. Jeez...I can't let that grabber go for less than.....jeez.....\$10.00.

A L V I N

(considering, not too happy)

OK. Ring her up.

Pete pulls down the grabber and longingly works it a few times and sets it reluctantly down on the counter. Alvin smiles. Pete starts ringing up Alvin's items.

P E T E

Three 5-gallon gas cans at \$9.89. Two Styrofoam coolers...

The beautiful bells and clicks and hammers of the old cash register are the only sounds in the room.

P E T E

Two coolers, 99 cents and
one....one...Alvin...

A L V I N

Ring it up Pete.

P E T E

With tax that's \$44.25.

Alvin fishes out a large black wallet held to his belt
by a chain. He pulls out two twenties and a five and
hands them to Pete.

S I G

What you need that grabber for Alvin?

Alvin turns to him.

A L V I N

Grabbin'.

Apple has his arm up to his elbow digging in his
boot. Suddenly he feels something.

A P P L E

Hah! It's a nail!

CUT TO:

35 EXT.—DAY ALVIN'S BACKYARD

35

Alvin and Rose are in the backyard. Alvin takes a can
of W-2 lubricant. He sprays the hitch holder on the
trailer. Then he laboriously makes his way across the
lawn to the riding mower. He sprays the hitch ball on
the mower. Rose is confused. Alvin then mounts the

lawn mower. He begins backing it up to the trailer.
Awareness finally crosses Rose's face. Her jaw drops.

R O S E

Oh.....jeeez Dad. Oh jeez.....Dad.

CUT TO:

36 EXT.—NIGHT ALVIN'S BACKYARD 36

Alvin is seated on a chaise lounge smoking a Swisher Sweet. He is looking at his mower/trailer rig. A mosquito coil burns beside him, casting a warm glow on the scene. Rose is lying on the ground on a blanket looking up at the stars. It is a beautiful autumn evening.

R O S E (cont'd)

...that trailer is too heavy for that...it's a lawnmower. You are going to....drive....a lawnmower to...another state.

A L V I N

Now Rose you gotta cease with your worryin'. You get that from your mother.

R O S E

But Dad....you....can't.

A L V I N

Rose....“can't” doesn't live here.

Alvin takes a puff of cigar.

A L V I N

It's gonna be fine Rose.

R O S E

Dad....please. I will find someone to drive you to Wisconsin. Pete.....you like Pete.....Pete...he is a good driver.

A L V I N

Now, Rose, sweetheart.....

Rose is starting to tear up. She is so worried about what he is doing. He reaches down and takes her hand.

A L V I N (cont'd)

I been on the road plenty. Didn't your mom and I haul you kids all around the country?

Rose nods, close to tears. She counts.

R O S E

One, Wisconsin...Two, Minnesota...Three, Wyoming but not long...Four was Oregon. We had goats. Five.....New Mexico and.....six.....good old....Iowa.

A L V I N

Remember when we traveled...you and your sister and brothers...

Rose nods and the reminiscence makes her happy.

A L V I N (cont'd)

We sure saw a lot. We all liked travelin'.

R O S E

Yeah.

(smiling at first but then the worry returns)

But this is different Dad.

ALVIN

It is Rose...it's easier...I'm not luggin'
seven kids in the back.

Rose nods. Her emotions are confused.

ROSE

But Dad.....you will be all alone. Won't
you be lonely?

ALVIN

Rosie...sometimes a man likes bein' a
little lonely.

Rose ponders this notion. A new anxiety creeps in.

ROSE

I will be alone.....here...

This stops Alvin. He realizes he hadn't really thought
about that and it makes him feel both bad and a lit-
tle worried. He hides his concern.

ALVIN (cont'd)

And you're going to be just fine.
Dorothy is next door and she can't keep
her nose out of our business. She'll be
over here seven times a day.

Rose laughs.

ROSE

Wait 'til she hears about.....this Dad.

They both share a laugh.

ALVIN (cont'd)

Rose I got to go see Lyle. I got to make this trip on my own. I know you understand that.

ROSE

I guess so....

ALVIN

Look at that sky Rose...full of stars tonight.

CUT TO:

37 EXT.—NIGHT ALVIN'S BACKYARD 37
POV a sky full of stars.

CUT TO:

38 INT.—DAY GROCERY STORE 38
Dorothy is at the checkout counter. Brenda is checking her out.

BRENDA

One bag of potato chips, two boxes of powdered donuts, one bag of corn nuts, six pack of Coca-Cola, two Snickers, three Hostess Sno-Balls...

DOROTHY

Give me a couple packs of Salem lights will ya hon?

Dorothy glances out the window of the store just in

time to see Alvin passing on his mower hauling the trailer.

DOROTHY

Well....I don't believe my eyes.

Brenda looks up and glances out the window. She sees Alvin passing on the mower. She doesn't miss a beat in her checking.

BRENDA

Oh yah. He's goin' to visit his brother in Wisconsin.

DOROTHY

On a lawnmower?!?!

BRENDA

Yah...

DOROTHY

Great party place, Wisconsin.

CUT TO:

39 INT.—DAY HARDWARE STORE 39

The Weather Channel is STILL on. Pete, Sig and Apple are watching. As they watch they hear a noisy engine approach out front. They turn to the store-front window. Alvin pulls into frame hauling the trailer behind his riding lawn mower.

SIG

(stunned)

Crimenetto.

All three exit the hardware store after Alvin.

CUT TO:

40 EXT.—DAY LAURENS MAIN STREET 40

The three hardware regulars trot alongside Alvin as he passes out of town.

A P P L E

Alvin just what are you settin' out to do here?

B U D

Oh for da cry eye Alvin.

A P P L E

Alvin you are gonna get blown right off the road is what I'm afraid.

S I G

(running out of breath and stopping, bending over,
hands on knees, wheezing)

Oh....(puffing)... jeez Alvin.

All three stop and watch as Alvin moves slowly out of town.

P E T E

(to no one in particular)

He'll never make it past the Grotto.

CUT TO:

41 EXT.—DAY IOWA COUNTY HIGHWAY 314 41

Tight shot of very, very slow yellow center line moving through frame to the tune of Steppenwolf's "Born to Be Wild" a la Easy Rider.

CUT TO:

42 EXT.—DAY IOWA COUNTY HIGHWAY 314 42

Wide shot from behind and then beside Alvin which takes in expansive landscape. A beautiful sunny day. America at five miles an hour.

CUT TO:

43 EXT.—DAY IOWA COUNTY HIGHWAY 314 43

Close shot Alvin happy to be on the road. Diggin' the pig farms. Music plays over.

CUT TO:

44 EXT.—DAY SAME HIGHWAY 44

Alvin passes a farmhouse. A farm wife is hanging clothes on a clothesline. She gawks. A boy gawks. A dog chases after Alvin. Alvin holds out his hand with a wiener in it. The dog sticks with him for awhile. We ride along with the two of them for a bit. Alvin turns to dog.

ALVIN

Go on home now.

The dog looks a little crestfallen but realizes Alvin is right. He wheels and heads back home.

CUT TO:

45 EXT.—DAY SAME HIGHWAY 45

A farmer in the field on a John Deere tractor cutting third crop hay. The mower and tractor are on in par-

allel tracks heading in the same direction. The field tractor passes him and he and the farmer exchange waves.

CUT TO:

46 EXT.—DAY SAME HIGHWAY 46

Alvin sees a sign that says, "Only Five More Miles to The Grotto of West Bend Iowa."

CUT TO:

47 EXT.—DAY SAME HIGHWAY 47

Alvin is approaching the outskirts of the town of West Bend. His reverie is interrupted by a distant, building sound. A huge truck approaches and flies by Alvin with a deafening roar. It completely rattles lawn mower, trailer, and Alvin. Alvin's hat is blown off. He has to stop the mower, get out his canes, do the slow dismount. He struggles down through a ditch into a field. He retrieves the hat, goes back down through the ditch. He climbs back up out of the ditch onto the road and mounts the mower. Real time. Just as he sits down, the tractor dies. Alvin hauls himself off the mower again and pops the hood. Shaking his head he gets back on the mower.

DISSOLVE TO:

48 EXT.—DAY 48

Alvin is sitting on the mower in the same spot. He reaches back into food locker, grabs a cold wiener. He sits and eats.

DISSOLVE TO:

49 EXT.—DAY 49

Alvin is sitting on the open back door of the trailer looking back down the road. He sees a bus

approaching. He waves it down and the bus stops.
The side of the bus has written large "SUN-RAY
TOURS."

CUT TO:

50 INT.—DAY INSIDE TOUR BUS

50

The doors of the bus pop open to reveal Alvin
standing there with his two canes, wearing his
Stetson.

ALVIN

I'm having some engine trouble.

The busdriver cranes his neck to look beyond Alvin
and spies the lawn mower and trailer.

BUSDRIVER

What the heck are you driving there.

ALVIN

A Rehds.

The busdriver is puzzled by this answer.

ALVIN (cont'd)

Can you give me a lift into town?

BUSDRIVER

I can get you as far as the Grotto. This
is the SUN-RAY Tour.

ALVIN

I'd appreciate that.

Alvin climbs on board.

CUT TO:

51 INT.—DAY ALVIN'S POV OF PASSENGERS 51

The bus is filled with senior citizens, mostly women. Each occupant is wearing a name tag bearing "SUN-RAY TOURS" and their name.

CUT TO:

52 INT.—DAY BUS 52

Alvin just gazes at the passengers.

CUT TO:

53 INT.—DAY BUS, ALVIN'S POV 53

A sea of white, blue and pink hair and wrinkled faces. One lady pops up and snaps his photo. She then turns and snaps a photo of the lawn mower and trailer.

CUT TO:

54 INT.—DAY BUS 54

Alvin moves down the aisle toward a seat. His canes are hanging one from each arm as he grips one seat back after another. Some of women cringe slightly as he passes. One old lady leans over to another.

OLD LADY #1

My Edward loved his riding mower.

CUT TO:

55 EXT.—DAY WEST BEND GROTTTO 55

The bus pulls up to the Grotto, a fantastic, magical tourist attraction. The old people begin to get out of the bus.

CUT TO:

Alvin sits patiently waiting for everyone else to leave the bus. People give a variety of looks as they file out. Alvin watches them as they walk into the Grotto. As the last person disappears through the entrance, he stands and slowly exits the bus.

CUT TO:

Pan of the interior wall of the Grotto. It is a beautifully detailed structure of pieces of rock and crystal. The stations of the Cross are represented on the two sides of the interior walls. Alvin sits on a bench in a courtyard inside the Grotto looking at what he sees. The bench is situated under a spreading oak tree. In the background we see the group from the bus with the tour guide talking through a megaphone.

TOUR GUIDE

...The Pastor of this Catholic Parish began his work on the Grotto in 1912 and continued it until his death in 1954. All this work you see before you was done by hand...

An old gentleman (WENDELL) breaks from the group and approaches Alvin. Wendell is wearing a seersucker suit with a bow tie. He is walking with one cane. He walks up to Alvin sitting on the bench.

WENDELL

May I share the bench? As you can see I have a little arthritis myself.

ALVIN

Be my guest.

Wendell sits, gets himself situated and leans forward on his cane.

WENDELL

This was one fellow who had quite a bit of time on his hands.

ALVIN

A lot of work.

The tour guide in the background has made some comment which causes all the women to start giggling. Alvin and Wendell turn at this.

ALVIN (cont'd)

So how's it travelling with a hen house?

WENDELL

Well I'll tell you. My wife passed away in '87. After she was gone I spent a lot of time alone. Oh there were women who came out of the woodwork trying to cook and clean for me. I managed to keep myself unattached and they finally stopped coming around. Then things got pretty quiet. I got to missing things.

ALVIN

My wife passed in 1981.

Wendell nods and they sit quiet for a moment.

W E N D E L L

My daughter tricked me into one of these bus trips a couple of years ago. It was The House on the Rock if I'm not mistaken. A very interesting structure that. I was the only man on that bus. It was a singular experience.

A L V I N

I bet.

They share a chuckle.

W E N D E L L

I was pleasantly surprised at how much I enjoyed all that femininity. I discovered how much I missed it. Since then I make one of these bus trips every other month. I rather enjoy the attention.

A L V I N

I live with my daughter Rose. Of course, it's different from being with my wife, but it's a comfort to have a woman around.

W E N D E L L

There's not a man born who doesn't enjoy being fussed over.

A L V I N

You wouldn't a had your way with any of these fillies now wouldja?

Wendell pauses and chuckles.

W E N D E L L

It is a wonder how invigorating a tumble with a maiden can be.

A L V I N

If there's a maiden on that bus I'll dance a jig.

W E N D E L L

(chuckling again)

See those three over there? They're Dominican nuns.

Alvin begins laughing and Wendell joins in. Without rising from the bench Alvin moves his feet in a jig. The two fellas laugh again. They hear an outburst of giggles from the gaggle of gals and look their way. One of the women waves to Wendell. He waves back. The two men sit in silence for a while.

W E N D E L L (c o n t ' d)

That's an interesting attachment to your lawn mower.

A L V I N

You mean my trailer.

W E N D E L L

Is that what that is? Why would you attach a trailer to a lawnmower.

ALVIN

I'm takin' a trip. That's where I bunk.

WENDELL

A trip on a lawnmower? That's an interesting means of conveyance. A bit hard on the hips isn't it?

ALVIN

No worse than a tumble with a maiden.

The two laugh again.

ALVIN

It's not too bad. A little rough on the dismount.

They laugh some more. It subsides.

WENDELL

And what's your destination.

ALVIN

Mt. Zion.

WENDELL

Wisconsin?

ALVIN

Yup.

WENDELL

I admire your gumption.

Two women have broken away from the crowd and approach the bench.

FIRST WOMAN

Oh Wendell. The tour guide has so much to say. We hate to see you miss this.

Wendell turns to Alvin and winks. Woman number two reaches down and flicks some lint off of Alvin's shoulder. Alvin smiles at her.

ALVIN

Thank you.

The woman blushes. Wendell stands and turns to Alvin.

WENDELL

Bon voyage my friend.

ALVIN

Adios.

Wendell and the two women walk away.

CUT TO:

58 EXT.—DAY HIGHWAY 314 58
Alvin tight as he rolls along the highway at a surprisingly fast speed. He is holding on to his hat. Pull back slowly to reveal Alvin on the bed of a pickup sitting on his lawn mower as it rolls back into Laurens.

CUT TO:

59 INT.—DAY LAURENS ACE HARDWARE 59
The Weather Channel is on. The locals all turn their heads as Alvin passes through their view out of the window.

S I G

Told ya that mower wouldn't make it
mor'n a few miles. Alvin (shakes his
head), he's got more brass than
brains.

P E T E

(almost to himself)

Hardly out a full day.

A P P L E

Least he's not hurt. Old timer like that
on the road. There's no tellin'.

Pete, Apple and Sig stand looking as Alvin passes.
Alvin looks straight ahead.

W E A T H E R P E R S O N

(off camera)

...and now for your local forecast.

Contrary to their previous actions when the local
forecast is announced, Pete, Sig and Apple do not
take their eyes off of Alvin. They walk to the win-
dow as he passes out of frame. They peer down the
street after him.

CUT TO:

60 INT.—DAY ALVIN'S KITCHEN

60

Rose is sitting at the kitchen table with Dorothy.
Between them is a large bowl of potato chips and
they are each drinking a large glass of milk.
Dorothy's hair is now bright red.

R O S E

...so the man in a pick up...he brought my...my dad back.

D O R O T H Y

Oh....I must've been at the beauty parlor. What kinda pickup?

Alvin enters kitchen from inside the house, passes by them and on out the back door. He is carrying a pump action shotgun under his arm. He has a little trouble with the canes, the gun and the back door. The gals stop talking until he goes out the door.

R O S E

A Ford.

Dorothy's eyes are glued to Alvin as she watches him through the kitchen window crossing the lawn.

D O R O T H Y

What's your dad doin' with that gun?

R O S E

I.....don't know. My dad...he got medals in the war for sharpshootin'....
But his eyes ain't so good now.

All through this we see Alvin out in the yard. He begins to put his canes down and prop himself up against a picnic table.

R O S E (cont'd)

Once he shot....a cougar....right

out....of a tree....it was up above me
and my.....brother Bobby.

Through the window we see Alvin pick up the shotgun and raise it to his shoulder. The two women unconsciously rise up out of their seats and move toward the window to see what is going on. Alvin pumps the shotgun and fires. The women can now see the target—the Rehds lawnmower explodes. Alvin pumps once more and finishes it off.

DOROTHY

Jeez.

CUT TO:

61 INT.—NIGHT ALVIN'S LIVING ROOM 61

Alvin and Rose are watching the TV news. Alvin is gluing coins onto the hatband of his Stetson.

ROSE

What.....are those Dad?

ALVIN

My Mexican coins.

ROSE

Remember...I was born in New Mexico....June....20...1960. The Mexican coin is a.....peso.....Why are you gluing pesos on your hat?

ALVIN

Ballast.

ROSE
(repeating with some confusion)

Ballast.

CUT TO:

62 EXT.—DAY JOHN DEERE DEALER IN LAURENS IOWA 62

Pan across flat Iowa landscape to huge John Deere sign. The camera moves down to find a herd of the huge, green titans of farm machinery; the John Deere tractors. We first see the biggest farm tractors John Deere makes, some more than a story tall with air-conditioned cabs, CD players and onboard global positioning computers. As the camera moves the vehicles get smaller, until the shot comes to rest on the spanking new John Deere Riding Mower, sparkling in the summer sun. As the camera rests on the riding mower we see Alvin, leaning on his two canes, gazing longingly at the mower.

CUT TO:

63 INT.—DAY JOHN DEERE DEALERSHIP 63

Two salesmen stand sipping coffee from official John Deere mugs. The older man is Tom. He is late 50s, greying and stocky and short. A seasoned tractor salesman who has seen it all. He is wearing a John Deere sports shirt, yellow with green JD logo over his breast. With Tom is his young, energetic sales rookie, Andy. Andy is a big kid, just off the family farm, a little soft but full of sales gumption. He works on straight commission. He too is wearing a

John Deere shirt and hat, which is a bit small for his great melon of a head.

A N D Y

That's the LD 155 right Mr. Hillenbrandt.

T O M

As I told ya'...Andy I'd rather ya didn't call me "Mister Hillenbrandt." Tom is fine. People hear you call me Mister and they'll think I've actually become a real businessman. Pretty soon they'll all be calling me Mr. Hillenbrandt and I'd have to sell my implement business and move to someplace where folks call me "Tom" again.

A N D Y

Sorry...T...T...Tom...it's just that I've been calling you Mister Hillenbrandt all my life...

T O M

Well you're out of school and a workin' fool like the rest of us now Andy and you can start usin' first names. And one other thing...that's not the LD 155, that's the LT 155.

Alvin enters the showroom, where there are more riding mowers.

A N D Y (CONFIDENTLY)

Would you like to me to handle this one...Tom?

T O M

Sure. It's Alvin Straight. I'm sure you'll do just fine Andy.

Andy walks over to meet Alvin as he enters the door. As he leaves Tom ducks his head and leaves the showroom. He turns and looks at ALICE, the gray haired woman who is his bookkeeper. She crosses herself and raises her eyes to the heavens. Alvin is looking at another model of riding mower as Andy saunters over.

A N D Y

Good morning. I'm Andy Laufenberg. Anything I can help you with today sir.

A L V I N

Well Andy Laufenberg...I'm looking to get a riding mower. I want good power—comfortable ride.

A N D Y

Well sir this is the one to look at. It's the John Deere LT 155....

Andy nervously reaches for a pamphlet.

A N D Y (c o n t ' d)

It's got a 15 horsepower Kawasaki engine. Cast iron cylin...

A L V I N

Japanese?

ANDY
(flummoxed)

No ah sir...no I'm not. I'm mostly Dutch.

ALVIN
The engine. Kawasaki. A Japanese engine?

ANDY
Yessir.

Alvin grunts.

ANDY (cont'd)
They...the Japanese make a very fine engine. The LD 155...

ALVIN
LT.

ANDY
Beg your pardon?

ALVIN
LT...LT 155...says here right on the side.

Andy is flustered and begins fumbling with the pamphlet.

ANDY
And you're right sir...similar models. By Gish that is the LT 155. Same engine

looks like and...it's...got....air
cooling...electronic ignition...right here
with that key....It's got a hydrostatic
drive transmission.

A L V I N

And what would that be?

A N D Y

Good question and I'm sure I can get
that answer for you...

Andy looks over his shoulder to search for Tom.
Tom and the bookkeeper wave and turn back to
some papers.

CUT TO:

64 INT.—DAY JOHN DEERE DEALERSHIP/ BOOK-
KEEPER'S OFFICE

64

A L I C E

How's he doin'?

T O M

Young salesmen are a painful thing to
witness. You add Alvin to the mix and
we may have to call the paramedics.

Alice giggles. They continue to watch Andy and
Alvin.

A L I C E

Shouldn't you rescue him now?

CUT TO:

Andy is still struggling.

ANDY

It's also got disc breaks...Mr...ah...Mr...
ah....sir.

ALVIN

Straight. Mr. Alvin Straight.

ANDY

Well Alvin. Disc brakes on a lawn
mower. Isn't that something?

ALVIN

You're young enough to be my grand-
son. Proper thing would be to call me
Mr. Straight. If a buck private called
me Alvin I made him shovel slop.

ANDY

Right Mr. Straight. I'm a bit new at
this and....and...well—

Tom crosses the showroom to them. Alvin nods.
Andy looks relieved.

ANDY

Just talking to Mr. Straight here, Mr.
Hillenbrandt...ah...well...he's interested
here in a LT 155.

T O M

Mornin' Alvin.

A L V I N

Tom.

T O M

Alvin the LT 155 runs about \$2500 dollars. What ya lookin' to spend today?

A L V I N

Not that much.

T O M

Follow me Alvin. Andy, Alice has some paperwork you need to fill out.

A N D Y

(dejected)

OK Mr. Hillenbrandt.

T O M

You did fine Andy. Didn't he Alvin?

A L V I N

Pleasure doing business with you Mr. Laufenberg.

Andy walks away dazed and confused.

T O M

Can you follow me around back Alvin? I got something that might fit your needs.

CUT TO:

The back lot of three dealership is an elephants' graveyard of tractors and implements and parts. If the front of the dealership is the color of John Deere green, the back is the color of rust. Tom and Alvin wind their way through the backlot talking as they go.

T O M

I set you up with that old Rehds that we had the last time didn't I, Alvin?

A L V I N

That you did.

T O M

That ran about \$325. Same price range?

A L V I N

Generally.

T O M

You tradin' in the Rehds today?

A L V I N

I don't think so Tom.

Tom nods. He decides not to ask more on the subject.

T O M

Pete tells me that you tried usin' the

rider in an interesting way. Still planning to do that?

ALVIN

Still planning to Tom.

TOM

I know better than to talk Alvin straight out of anything he sets his mind to. But I have to tell you Alvin that you have always struck me as a smart man....

ALVIN

That's appreciated.

TOM

...Until now.

Alvin chuckles. They come around a large John Deere field tractor and there sitting amongst the heaps is an old John Deere riding mower. Strong, simple and still green with a golden-yellow, tractor-style seat. Alvin looks at it.

ALVIN

What year?

TOM

'66. Has the Kohler engine. We've used it for parts but I always order and replace them when they arrive. The guts are good.

ALVIN

How fast will it go?

TOM

'Bout five miles an hour...more downhill. It's got the old transmission. Nothing fancy.

ALVIN

What are you askin' Tom?

Tom pauses and sighs. Looks around the lot.

TOM

Alvin, we've done business before. I know you're an old horse trader from way back and I don't much feel like sparring with you today. Hard to find a price on a riding mower that's near 30 years old. Your guess is as good as mine....I guess I'd just like to ask you what you're willing to pay.

Alvin takes a look at the mower.

ALVIN

It's a good machine?

TOM

It's a good machine, Alvin.

ALVIN

I've got three hunnert and 25 dollars Tom. And there's no fiction there.

T O M

That sounds fine with me Alvin. Let's go and you can settle up with Alice.

A L V I N

One last thing Tom. You can tell a little something about a machine this old by who's run it. Do you know who owned it?

T O M

Sure do Alvin. Me.

CUT TO:

67 INT.—DAY JOHN DEERE SHOWROOM. 67
Tom and Andy watch Alvin drive away on his mower.

T O M

Well congratulations, Andy.

A N D Y

Thanks...Tom...but you sold it.

T O M

No sir...you spotted the customer and brought him in...I just cleaned up. You go on and see Alice. Three percent on \$325 dollars outta be enough for a pitcher of beer tonight...but there'll be more where that came from.

Andy walks away while Tom continues to watch Alvin drive away down the road.

T O M (cont'd)
(to himself)

It's worth it to tell everyone you sold it
to Alvin Straight.

CUT TO:

68 EXT.—DAY ALVIN'S BACKYARD 68

Alvin and Rose are in the backyard repeating the
good-bye. Alvin is perched on the John Deere
mower and Rose is standing next to him arguing.

R O S E

But Dad I was.....right. You ran into
trouble.....the first....day.

Alvin is determined but gentle.

A L V I N

The only mistake I made was my
equipment. I'm going to be fine now
Rose. Nothing runs like a.....

Alvin pats the mower...he looks expectantly to
Rose...She is puzzled....she looks back at him...what
is he talking about?

A L V I N

A Deere...Rose...Nothin' runs like a
Deere.

Rose nods, still not quite sure what they're talking
about. Alvin motions his head in the direction of
Dorothy's house. Rose looks over.

CUT TO:

69 EXT.—DAY DOROTHY'S HOUSE 69

Dorothy ducks out of the window where she has been watching Alvin and Rose.

CUT TO:

70 EXT.—DAY ALVIN'S BACKYARD 70

ALVIN

I gotta go just to give her something to chew on.

Rose smiles.

ALVIN (cont'd)

You know I gotta do this Rose.

Rose tries to smile through her anxiety, and nods.

CUT TO:

71 EXT.—DAY LAURENS DINER 71

OMIT

CUT TO:

72 INT.—DAY ALVIN'S BACK PORCH 72

Rose is sitting at her workbench painting a bird-house. She frowns and shakes her head.

ROSE

God.....I am.....so worried....about.....
our dad. Please God....don't let noth-
in'.....bad....happen....to him.

CUT TO:

73 EXT.—DAY IOWA HWY 314 AT GROTTO SIGN

73

Alvin tools on by the point where he broke down

before, tips his hat at sign. Secures his hat nice and snug. Here comes that ominous sound of an oncoming truck. Alvin shows no fear. The truck booms by, rocking trailer, mower and Alvin but THE HAT IS ROCK SOLID. Alvin smiles.

CUT TO:

74 EXT.—DAY THE GROTTTO 74

Alvin drives past the Grotto and smiles.

CUT TO:

75 EXT.—DAY IOWA HIGHWAY 75

Alvin is moving down the shoulder and slows to a stop. He pulls out his box of Swisher Sweets and lights up. He sits for a moment and considers the landscape around him: a vast expanse of flat cornfields and the road stretching into the horizon ahead of him. The mower is idling and there is no other sound. He is content.

CUT TO:

76 EXT.—DAY 76

Alvin slows down as he is passing a small woods on the side of the road. He comes to a stop and considers the woods. He makes his laborious dismount and stretches. He goes around back of the trailer, reaches in and gets his grabber and a tarp. He heads into the woods and begins grabbing some wood. This is no simple task since he's walking with the two canes. After grabbing a large piece of wood while placing it on the tarp, his hand slips off one of his canes. He tries to catch himself but falls face down on the ground. He doesn't move.

CUT TO:

77 EXT.—DAY CLOSE SHOT OF ALVIN 77
Cut close to Alvin's face. There is fear in his eyes and his breathing is labored. After collecting himself he looks around for his canes.

CUT TO:

78 EXT.—DAY ALVIN ON THE GROUND 78
He reaches out and gets a hold of his canes. With all his might he slowly struggles back to his feet. Still shaking he uses one cane to retrieve the grabber. With the grabber he gets the stick that had undone him and loads it onto the tarp and drags it over to the trailer. He puts the sticks into the back one by one. He climbs aboard and pulls back onto the shoulder and heads off down the highway.

CUT TO:

79 EXT.—LATE AFTERNOON CAMPSITE IN A 79
FARMER'S FIELD
Alvin pulls off the road onto a dirt track leading into a field. He is in the wide open, no trees, no farm buildings. He takes a look at the surroundings and pulls off the track where the ground is slightly higher. He does the slow dismount off the Deere and stretches, rubbing his lower back. He goes about setting up for the night. He opens the trailer and pulls out an aluminum frame chaise lounge and some of the firewood he had gathered. He slowly gathers twigs & leaves for kindling for the fire. He opens up the food locker at the front of the trailer and pulls out a few items. He puts a few hot dogs and some bread and cheese on a plate. He sits down on the camping chair and proceeds to eat with little

ceremony. It is not quite magic hour.

DISSOLVE TO:

80 EXT.—MAGIC HOUR FARMER'S FIELD 80

Alvin has built a fire. He sits in his lawn chair drinking coffee and smoking a Swisher Sweet. His canes are lying across his lap. The night is very quiet. Alvin listens to the quiet and the occasional rustle of small field animals. He looks to the horizon where the sun had set.

CUT TO:

81 EXT.—MAGIC HOUR 81

The sky is royal blue with a band of gold at the horizon. Higher up the sky is navy blue and there are a million stars as you can only see in a clear country sky. Alvin sits back and enjoys his smoke.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

82 EXT.—DAY HIGHWAY 18 82

Alvin going down the road. He sees a small figure up ahead. A car whizzes past Alvin. The figure ahead sticks out a thumb. The car passes by. Alvin approaches the figure, sees its a young, tough-looking girl CRYSTAL. She has dark hair under a baseball cap. Somewhere between 13 and 17 years old. Heavy eye makeup, bad tattoo on her shoulder. She is wearing a tank top, cut-offs, high-top sneakers with tiger-striped laces, and a backpack. Alvin nods in acknowledgment as he passes her. She coldly returns his gaze.

CUT TO:

83 EXT.—NIGHT ALVIN'S CAMPSITE 83
 Alvin is eating a raw hot dog. He has built a campfire.
 CUT TO:

84 EXT.—NIGHT SAME HIGHWAY WIDE SHOT 84
 Crystal is walking along.
 CUT TO:

85 EXT.—NIGHT SAME HIGHWAY CRYSTAL'S
 POV 85
 Crystal spies Alvin's campfire in the field along the
 road. The lawnmower and trailer are clearly visible
 and she remembers him from the road.
 CUT TO:

86 EXT.—NIGHT SAME HIGHWAY 86
 Crystal considers. Her face is unreadable...her inten-
 tions are unclear. She cuts off the road into the field
 and heads toward the campsite.
 CUT TO:

87 EXT.—NIGHT ALVIN'S CAMPSITE. 87
 Alvin barely looks up as Crystal walks into range of
 campfire light. Neither of them say anything for
 some time.

CRYSTAL
 I couldn't get a ride.

Alvin nods his head. Doesn't say anything for a bit.

ALVIN
 Hungry?

CRYSTAL
 Whatya got?

ALVIN

Wieners.

CRYSTAL

Wieners?

ALVIN

Grab a stick and cook one.

He points to the fire. She hesitates...looks at Alvin for a bit longer. Alvin just keeps looking at the fire. Finally she looks around, finds a stick and leans toward Alvin to take a hot dog. She hunkers down holding the stick with the hot dog over the fire. She casts occasional glances at Alvin. More silence. She looks over to the mower and trailer. Her expression darkens.

CRYSTAL (cont'd)

What a hunk of junk.

ALVIN

Eat your dinner missy.

Startled a bit at his abruptness she falls silent. She nibbles on her hot dog and then realizing how hungry she is she begins to eat faster. She polishes off the hot dog. Alvin notices this.

ALVIN (cont'd)

Get yourself another.

She's relieved at this offer and gets another hot dog, puts it on the stick and holds it over the fire. They sit, not speaking, listening to a chorus of crickets and peepers.

CRYSTAL

How long you been out on the road?

ALVIN

I've traveled just about all my life.

CRYSTAL

I like being out on the road.

ALVIN

It's different for a girl alone.

CRYSTAL

(defensively)

It doesn't have to be different for a girl.

Alvin just nods his head. Doesn't speak or look at her.

CRYSTAL (cont'd)

Where you from?

ALVIN

Laurens.

She nods, and sits quietly.

CRYSTAL

You got a wife back there?

ALVIN

Nope.

CRYSTAL

Kids?

ALVIN

My wife Frances brought fourteen kids
into the world. Only seven made it....
My daughter Rose lives with me.

No comment for a while.

ALVIN (cont'd)

Frances died in '81.

Quiet for a time.

ALVIN (cont'd)

Where's your family?

Now she's not talking.

ALVIN (cont'd)

You runnin' away?

She still doesn't answer. Alvin leans back and draws
on his cigar. He looks at the girl.

ALVIN (cont'd)

How far along are you?

Crystal looks away from the fire into the darkness.

CRYSTAL

Five months.

Alvin nods. More quiet. Alvin gets up, walks out of
firelight with his grabber and comes back with a log.
He throws it on the fire and works the embers for a
bit.

ALVIN

My daughter Rose that lives with
me...she's what some people would call

a little slow. But she's not. She's got a mind like a bear trap for facts and keeps everything organized around the house. She was a real good mom....had four kids.

He pauses looking into the fire. Crystal watches him expectantly.

ALVIN (cont'd)

One night.....someone else was watchin' the kids...

DISSOLVE TO:

88 INT.—NIGHT ALVIN'S KITCHEN

88

We see the shot of Rose sitting alone in the kitchen that we saw before. She is at the kitchen table smoking a cigarette and thinking.

ALVIN

(continuing in voice over)

There was a fire. Her second boy got burned real bad. Rose didn't have nothin' to do with it.

He pauses.

ALVIN (cont'd)

(continuing in voice over)

...but...because of the way Rose is... the state said she wasn't comp'tant to care for the kids and took them all away.

DISSOLVE TO:

ALVIN

Not a day passes she doesn't pine for those kids.

Crystal looks away from him into the fire. He looks back to the fire, coughs.

ALVIN

Well, I'm headin' to see my brother Lyle.

CRYSTAL

Huh?

ALVIN

I said I'm goin' to visit my brother Lyle in Mt. Zion.

CRYSTAL

Where's that?

ALVIN

In Wisconsin. Just over the state line.

CRYSTAL

(nodding)

Oh....Cheddar Heads.

Alvin laughs at this and Crystal smiles, too.

ALVIN

Aren't those just about the dumbest things you ever saw a person put on their head?

She nods and laughs.

CRYSTAL

I hear that's a real party place,
Wisconsin. Guess I'll never get to find
out.

They sit in silence. Alvin looks away from the fire.

ALVIN

I haven't seen my brother in ten years.

Alvin picks up the hot dogs and takes one out of the
pack. He proceeds to eat it raw.

CRYSTAL

You're eatin' a raw hot dog!

ALVIN

(smiling)

I like 'em straight up.

Crystal makes a face. Alvin munches slowly.

CRYSTAL

Ten years is a long time.

Crystal shivers with a chill. Alvin notices this.

ALVIN

There's a blanket in the trailer.

Crystal leaves firelight. She rustles about in the trailer.

CRYSTAL

(offscreen)

What the hell kind of boom box is
this?

ALVIN

Eight track stereo...watch your god-damned language.

CRYSTAL
(offscreen)

Are these videotapes or what?

ALVIN

That's music girlie.

CRYSTAL

They're huge!.....I never seen anything like this.

We hear some rattling and the sound of the tape going in. A sweet Patsy Cline ballad floats out of the trailer and into the night air. Smiling, Crystal comes back into the light with a blanket around her shoulders.

CRYSTAL (cont'd)

Figured it out.

ALVIN

Good girl.

They sit for a while and listen to the music.

CRYSTAL (cont'd)

Your brother.

ALVIN (cont'd)

Lyle and I had a falling out.

CRYSTAL

Over what?

ALVIN

I can't say as I recall.

CRYSTAL

Well that's pretty stupid. You haven't seen him in 10 years because of a fight and you can't remember what the fight was about?

ALVIN

You got some rude habits girl.

Crystal is taken aback. She is quiet, thinking.

ALVIN (cont'd)

Maybe I do recall.

Quiet for a while.

ALVIN (cont'd)

People do lots of stupid things, knowing they're stupid.

He looks at her. She looks up.

CRYSTAL

Sorry.

They both stare into the fire for a while.

CRYSTAL

So why are you going to see him now?

ALVIN

He's sick.

Crystal is poking the fire with the stick. Alvin picks up another stick and he starts poking the fire.

CRYSTAL

My family hates me. They'll really hate me when they find out....

ALVIN

You didn't tell them?

CRYSTAL

No...no one knows...not even my boyfriend.

ALVIN

Well that doesn't strike me as fair treatment of your people.

CRYSTAL

I can take care of my own problems.

There is a pause as they watch the fire. Then Alvin speaks.

ALVIN

Don't let pride make you dumb. I should know.

She's listening.

ALVIN (cont'd)

They may not be happy. But not so much that they want to lose you...or your little problem.

CRYSTAL

I don't know about that.

ALVIN

Well a course neither do I but a warm bed and a roof sounds a mite better than this...eating hot dogs on a stick with an old geezer traveling on a lawn mower.

She giggles a bit and then falls silent. After a moment, Alvin stirs.

ALVIN (cont'd)

When my kids were young I played a game with them. I'd give each of them a stick. One for each of 'em, and I'd tell them to break it. They'd do that easy. Then I'd tell them to make one bundle of all the sticks and try to break that. A course they couldn't. I used to say that was family, that bundle.

Crystal listens in silence.

ALVIN (cont'd)

Sleep in the trailer if you want. I'll be just fine here in my chair.

CRYSTAL

No, I'll be fine sleeping out here.
Looking at the stars helps me think.

Alvin nods. He begins to struggle to his feet. Crystal stands to help him. After a moment of hesitation Alvin accepts her arm. He stands, nods, smiles and moves slowly to the trailer. Crystal sits down alone to watch the fire. We hear the sounds of Alvin settling into the trailer. A bit of silence.

ALVIN
(from offscreen)

Sweet dreams.

CUT TO:

90 EXT.—NIGHT ALVIN'S TRAILER 90

Alvin's trailer door is open to the night air. We slowly push into the dark rectangular opening of the trailer.

FADE IN:

91 EXT.—SUNRISE 91

A wide establishing shot of the Iowa landscape at sunrise.

CUT TO:

92 EXT.—SUNRISE ALVIN'S CAMPSITE. 92

Alvin crawls out of the trailer. Crystal's gone. Next to the cold campfire is a bundle of sticks bound with a tiger-striped shoelace.

CUT TO:

93 EXT.—DAY HWY 18 93

A series of dissolves:
Alvin is tooling down the road.

DISSOLVE TO:

94 EXT.—DAY HWY 18 94

He passes a pig farm.

DISSOLVE TO:

95 EXT.—DAY HWY 18 95

He passes a sheep farm.

DISSOLVE TO:

- 96 EXT.—DAY HWY 18 96
He passes a dairy farm.
DISSOLVE TO:
- 97 EXT.—DAY HWY 18 97
He passes a buffalo farm.
DISSOLVE TO:
- 98 EXT.—DAY HWY 18 98
He passes an ostrich farm.
DISSOLVE TO:
- 99 EXT.—MAGIC HWY 18 99
Alvin comes upon a concrete animal (yard ornament) manufacturer. He pulls off and sets up camp alongside.
CUT TO:
- 100 EXT.—NIGHT ALVIN'S CAMPSITE 100
Alvin is eating, thinking, enjoying the evening in the company of a menagerie of small concrete animals surrounding him in the campfire. The light of the fire plays off their faces.
FADE TO BLACK.
FADE IN:
- 101 EXT.—DAY HWY 18 101
Cornfields on either side of the highway. The corn is high in the field, topped by swaying golden tassels.
CUT TO:
- 102 EXT.—AFTERNOON HWY 18 ON THE
APPROACH TO WEST UNION, IOWA 102
Alvin has had to pull into a busy four lane highway on the outskirts of a medium-sized city. There is no

shoulder as there has been out in the country. The traffic is heavy. Drivers pass, some angry some curious. A squad car pulls up behind and turns on its lights. Alvin is oblivious. Frustrated the POLICE OFFICER (young but not a rookie) gets on the loudspeaker...

WEST UNION POLICEMAN
(very loud)

Please pull your vehicle off the road.

Alvin jumps and looks around. He sees the police car and pulls into the parking lot of a Computer Cosmos store. He sits patiently on the mower waiting for the officer. The officer approaches.

WEST UNION POLICEMAN
May I see your driver's license sir?

Alvin looks at the guy and laughs. The officer looks off, takes a deep breath.

WEST UNION POLICEMAN (cont'd)
Have you been drinking today sir?

ALVIN
No sir.

The Cop thinks for a minute, looks at heavy traffic passing by, looks at Alvin, his mower and trailer.

WEST UNION POLICEMAN
I'm going to have to ask you to step out...uh...get off of the lawn mower, sir.

Alvin goes into the slow dismount. Officer regards

this and reaches to assist. Alvin jerks his arm away from the officer.

WEST UNION POLICEMAN

Sir, would you just walk a straight line for me?

Alvin looks at his canes, looks at the officer and proceeds to walk a straight line.

WEST UNION POLICEMAN (cont'd)

Sir, can you do that without the canes?

ALVIN

Nope, I'll tip over.

The Cop looks down.

WEST UNION POLICEMAN

OK Sir. I don't believe you have been drinking but I'm gonna have to ask you to stay here at Computer Cosmos for another hour or so...just 'til traffic dies down. That would be best for you and the other cars. Alright?

Alvin nods and hobbles back to the mower. He mounts and the cop watches this. The cop then gets into his squad car and takes off.

DISSOLVE TO:

103 EXT.—DUSK THE COMPUTER COSMOS
PARKING LOT

103

Alvin sits and waits. Cars whizz by.

DISSOLVE TO:

104 EXT.—DUSK RED ROAD ON HWY 18 104

Alvin is once again on a country road. A car passes him. The woman driving gawks at him as she passes. Moments later we hear off camera a screech of brakes and a heavy thud. We see Alvin react to the event up ahead.

CUT TO:

105 EXT.—DUSK RED ROAD HWY 18 ALVIN'S POV 105

Up ahead a blue Japanese subcompact is parked at a strange angle across the shoulder of the road. The engine is still running. Smoke rises from the hood. The driver car door opens and a hefty woman with a bouffant hairdo, stretch pants and a tunic gets out. Alvin's POV slow approach. He watches her as she walks around to the front of the car, and looks down to the ground. She looks up to the heavens and then begins pounding her open hand on the top of the car hood.

CUT TO:

106 EXT.—DUSK RED ROAD HWY 18 106

Alvin reacts to the scene as he approaches.

CUT TO:

107 48. EXT.—DUSK RED ROAD HWY 18 107

Alvin drives up to the woman. Alvin executes his slow dismount. The woman glances briefly at Alvin but barely registers his presence because she is so distraught.

ALVIN

Can I help Miss?

DEER WOMAN

No you can't help me. Jesus, Mary and Joseph. No one can help me.

Alvin moves around to the front of the car. He notes that the car has quite a few dents. We see that the woman has struck a nice eight point buck. Alvin's face shows relief. All the while the woman rants and paces.

DEER WOMAN (cont'd)

I've tried driving with my lights on. I've tried sounding my horn. I scream out the window. I roll the window down and bang on the side of the door and play Public Enemy real loud...I have prayed to St. Francis of Assisi...St. Christopher too, what the hell! I have tried everything a person can do and still every week I plow into at least one deer. What is it?

Alvin shakes his head. She now begins walking around the car, the mower and Alvin. She flails her arms.

DEER WOMAN (cont'd)

I have hit 13 deer in seven weeks driving down this road mister and I have to drive this road every day 40 miles back and forth to work. I don't know what to do...I have to drive to work and I have to drive home...

She pauses. Takes a deep breath and looks out over the flat landscape. She turns and pats the deer carcass.

DEER WOMAN
He's dead.

She starts to cry.

DEER WOMAN (cont'd)
And I love deer.

She turns and climbs back in her car. She backs up and sprays gravel as she accelerates away. Her front fender falls off and she runs over it. Alvin watches her drive away, then looks down at the deer.

CUT TO:

108 EXT.—NIGHT ALVIN'S CAMPFIRE 108

Alvin is eating a large piece of meat. Behind Alvin we see a full set of antlers mounted on the front of the trailer.

CUT TO:

109 EXT.—MIDDAY HWY 18 IOWA FLATLANDS 109

Alvin is driving along a particularly desolate stretch of road. His eye scans the horizon. He is wary. He slows the mower and brings it to a stop, the engine idling. We see Alvin's face tight. He sees something.

110 EXT.—DAY HWY 18 IOWA FLATLANDS ALVIN'S POV 110

The Iowa horizon is a large dark mass. An occasional burst of light races through the black clouds. A breeze blows dirt along the field. Alvin's gaze search-

es for shelter. There are no farms near. He cannot outrace the storm. He spots a small outbuilding alone in the field. It is an old granary, used by farmers to store corn.

CUT TO:

111 EXT.—DAY

111

Alvin turns off the highway onto a narrow rutted field road used only by the farmer to get to his crops. It is pot-holed and uneven. Alvin stops at the entry to the road. Moving as quickly as he can, Alvin secures everything that could blow away on the mower and the trailer. Then he mounts the mower and races for shelter. As he's heading to the granary the sky darkens dramatically and the winds hit. He puts his head down into the gust, holds onto his hat and lets out a holler, carrying all the speed a riding mower can. He bounces across the field and closes on the granary. Just as a large crack of lightning, rain and the full gust of wind sweep in, Alvin makes it into the sanctuary of the granary. A smile crosses his face as he revels in the race before the storm and the pleasure of watching the thunderstorm from beneath a strong roof. He shares the granary with a flock of pigeons who have taken shelter as well. Alvin sits looking out on the storm, relaxed and content on his perch aboard the mower.

DISSOLVE TO:

112 EXT.—DAY IOWA COUNTY HIGHWAY

112

A warm afternoon. Alvin is making his way down a lonely stretch of Iowa highway. The perforated, yellow center line passes slowly below him. Suddenly Alvin hears a strange, whirring sound. A moment

later he is startled by a strangely helmeted, goggled, bicyclist speeding by him.

CYCLIST # 1

On your left! Thank you.

ALVIN

What the.....?

Another whir and another cyclist passes.

CYCLIST # 2

On your left. Thank you.

And then a trio of cyclists. Another rider approaches pedalling a recumbent bicycle.

CYCLIST # 3

Comin' by on your left. Thank you!

ALVIN

What in the hell....?

Alvin pulls his rig over to the side of the road and watches as a large herd of cyclists, numbering more than a hundred riders, engulfs Alvin and his rig. One rider slows to gawk at Alvin and nearly causes an accident. Other cyclists wave as they churn by...a few yell greetings.

CUT TO:

113 EXT.—DAY AERIAL VIEW OF IOWA ROAD 113

We see a swarm numbering hundreds of bike riders passing Alvin parked on the road.

DISSOLVE TO:

Alvin pulls over for the evening to make camp at a county park. Also at the wayside are many of the cyclists who passed Alvin earlier. Pup tents abound. Riders, dressed in skin-tight, brightly colored spandex cycle togs, are spread about the park eating, drinking out of squirt bottles, stretching, hydrating, swapping massages and just plain preening. Alvin pulls into the park. Heads turn as Alvin passes through the crowd. A few onlookers begin clapping. Alvin, a bit of a showman, doffs his Stetson to even more applause. He pulls over to an open patch of campground and brings the John Deere to a halt. He begins his arduous dismount. A cyclist looks on.

CYCLIST #1

That's the same sound we make when
we dismount.

CUT TO:

Some cyclists, mostly younger, are gathered around Alvin's campfire and trailer. STEVE is in his early 30s, an earnest, likable fellow with a neatly trimmed beard.

STEVE

So you're averaging about twenty miles
a day?

ALVIN

'Bout that. She'll go five miles an hour
if I push 'er. I stop when my hips start
barkin'.

The other talkative cyclist is RAT. He is early 20s, bleached cropped hair and he features a smattering of tattoos. He talks like a skateboarder.

RAT

Wow man, five miles an hour.

Rat looks up to see a ball flying in his direction. He snags it and tosses it back offscreen. He's not exactly paying close attention to Alvin.

STEVE

So you're thinking about five weeks to get to your brother's place in Wisconsin?

ALVIN

I haven't given it a schedule. That would sound about right.

RAT

Oh man.....I could not handle five weeks on a lawn mower.

ALVIN

And I couldn't handle sittin' on one of them seats for more'n an hour....if that. You all walk like you got a case of baboon butt. Seems my ride is a bit more comfortable.

The cyclists laugh. Rat catches the ball again.

RAT

So why the lawnmower?

Rat tosses the ball.

ALVIN

Can't drive. My eyes. Don't like other people drivin' me where I want to go.

RAT

I can totally dig that.

Alvin smiles and rises to get more firewood. Steve notices the difficulty he has walking and gets up to help.

STEVE

Can I ask how old you are Alvin?

ALVIN

Seventy-three.

RAT

Oh man. Seventy-three years old. Bad eyes, bad hips.

ALVIN

Eyes, hips....diabetes....circylation.
Can't hardly believe it myself. I'm older
that I ever thought I'd be.

Two young spandex-clad women walk by. Alvin follows them with his eyes.

ALVIN (cont'd)

You don't think about old age when
you're young. Shouldn't.

STEVE

When d'ya know you're getting old?

Alvin stirs the fire.

ALVIN

The first time I felt old was when I saw
a buddy die in the war. I got old that
minute.

The group around the campfire is silent for a while.

STEVE

There must be something good about
getting old.

Alvin ponders a moment, stirring the fire.

ALVIN

Hard to imagine anything good about
goin' blind and lame at the same time.
But still...at my age...you've seen most
everything life has to dish out. You can
separate the wheat from the chaff. You
know to let the small stuff fall away.

RAT

Cool man.

Rat snags the ball one more time. Someone offscreen
yells

BIKE RIDER
(offscreen)

Sally's in my tent.

Rat laughs and throws the ball back. Still smiling and looking off...

RAT

What's the worst thing about being old Alvin?

Alvin stirs the fire. The embers rise on the flames. Alvin watches the embers float up into the night sky and stars.

ALVIN

The worst thing about being old is remembering when you were young.

Again the group around the fire falls silent. They listen to the night sounds.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

116 EXT.—DAY HWY 18

116

Alvin is moving out of the prairie and approaching the Mississippi Valley terrain. Corn is being harvested in the fields and the leaves have begun to turn colors. He begins to climb gently rolling hills. As he does the mower begins to show signs of strain. He pulls off the road half way up one of these gentle hills to lash his shift lever into low gear.

CUT TO:

117 EXT.—DAY CLERMONT, IOWA HOUSE ON FIRE

117

Close shot of an inferno. A house is burning down.

CUT TO:

118 EXT.—DAY CLERMONT, DANNY RIORDAN 'S
FRONT PORCH 118

Five people are sitting in aluminum chairs sitting watching the fire. They are drinking beer. They do not seem alarmed by the house burning down across the street.

CUT TO:

119 EXT.—DAY CLERMONT IOWA 119

Wide shot reveals that volunteer firemen are burning down the house as a firefighting exercise.

CUT TO:

120 EXT.—DAY DANNY RIORDAN'S FRONT
PORCH 120

Everyone is clearly enjoying watching the house burn down and the firefighters scurry about.

DANNY RIORDAN is the owner of the house on whose porch everyone is gathered. He is mid-50's shortish and stocky, and wears khaki bermuda shorts and a Hawaiian print shirt. His wife DARLA RIORDAN is of similar build and age and has a full head of blond, bouffant hair. She wears white capri pants and a bright yellow shirt. Their friends JOHNNY AND JANET JOHNSON and VERLYN HELLER have joined them for the festivities. Johnny and Janet are about the same age as Danny and Darla and have known each other since high school. They all have a strangely youthful air about them. Johnny and Janet are both very quiet, small and neat. Verlyn is quite a bit older and a farmer. He is very tan and rugged looking. At the same time he bears a certain air of refinement.

DARLA RIORDAN
Criminy sakes alive. You can feel the
heat all the way over here.

JOHNNY JOHNSON
Makes you appreciate what a volunteer
fireman has to do.

DANNY RIORDAN
That Rumelthanger place was an eye-
sore.

DARLA RIORDAN
Remember old man Rumelthanger?
What a dirty old cur...never bathed.
The smell that came off that man. I tell
you, it was enough to make a girl faint.

DANNY RIORDAN
You always had an inclination to faint
Darla.

Darla blushes at this.

JANET
You know. There really is something
about watching a fire that causes you to
sort of go off...like it's hypnotism.

VERLYN
Time was when all civilization did was
stare at the fire.

They are happy. It's like the fourth of July and they
are all feeling like kids watching a house burn down

on a warm autumn afternoon. Shouts of volunteer firemen in the background.

CUT TO:

121 EXT.—DAY BURNING HOUSE 121

Shots of firemen battling the blaze. A small crowd has assembled next to the house to watch the show. The firemen turn and wave to the assembly. A wife is taking pictures. We hear a clattering sound intrude upon the scene. It is not coming from the fire.

CUT TO:

122 EXT.—DAY RIORDAN'S FRONT PORCH 122

Darla's attention is drawn from the fire by the rattling sound. She looks up the hill.

DARLA RIORDAN

What's that noise?

One after another they turn their heads to the direction of the hill.

VERLYN

Now what in the sam hill do you suppose...

Down the hill, barely under control comes Alvin on the mower.

JOHNNY JOHNSON

What on earth....?

DARLA RIORDAN

(to Danny)

Honey bun...is that a lawnmower?"

JANET

It's going too fast for a lawnmower.
Isn't it Danny?

DARLA RIORDAN

And what on earth is drivin' that
thing?!

CUT TO:

123 EXT.—DAY CLERMONT HILL ALVIN ON
MOWER

123

Alvin is barreling down the hill, foot stamping on
brake, no response. The steering becomes more diffi-
cult.

CUT TO:

124 EXT.—DAY RIORDAN'S FRONT PORCH

124

VERLYN

That sure as hell is a lawnmower....
with an old Indian on top.

JOHNNY JOHNSON

He doesn't look like he has that thing
under control.

DANNY RIORDAN

(he begins heading over to the scene and over his
shoulder he adds)

...nothing runs like a Deere.

CUT TO:

125 EXT.—DAY CLERMONT HILL ALVIN ON THE MOWER 125

Wide shot of Alvin careening down the hill, picking up even more speed.

CUT TO:

126 EXT.—DAY ALVIN'S POV 126

The road moves back and forth. Burning house fast approaching. Look to road bed flying by beneath the mower. This is much faster than Alvin or the mower has ever gone.

CUT TO:

127 EXT.—DAY CLERMONT HILL ALVIN ON MOWER 127

Alvin picks up speed. His hat threatens to blow off. Water is streaming from his eyes. Amazingly he makes it to the bottom of the hill without rolling the machine. As he comes to a stop the front porch gang reaches him.

128 EXT.—DAY BOTTOM OF THE HILL 128

Alvin is sitting on the mower catching his breath and composure. He wipes the tears from his cheeks. Some of the volunteer fireman turn their attention from the burning house to the activity at the bottom of the hill.

DANNY RIORDAN

Mister are you O.K.?

Alvin is a little shaky. Nods in answer to Danny's question.

JOHNNY JOHNSON
Jeez Mister you're lucky she didn't roll
on you.

ALVIN
(a little short of breath)

I think the belt's shot.

DANNY RIORDAN
I wouldn't be surprised. You don't have
brakes on that trailer do you?

Alvin shakes his head.

DANNY RIORDAN (cont'd)
Mister I worked for John Deere for
thirty years so I can tell ya you should-
n't be hauling a rig like that behind a
riding mower. At least not down a hill
like that.

Alvin doesn't really respond. Danny softens a little.
Considers the situation.

DANNY RIORDAN (cont'd)
I'm Danny Riordan.

He extends his hand. Alvin reaches out.

ALVIN
Alvin Straight.

DANNY RIORDAN
Well Alvin...let's get you and this rig off
the road and see what the damage is.

Alvin goes through the slow dismount under the watchful eyes of Darla and Janet. Danny and Verlyn start to push the mower and trailer and are joined by a couple of the volunteer fireman. Alvin brings up the rear, moving slowly.

CUT TO:

129 EXT.—DAY BEHIND RIORDAN'S HOUSE 129

Guys are pushing Alvin's rig into the backyard. They roll to a stop alongside a small separate garage.

DANNY RIORDAN
Well let's have a look at this mower.
This is what? '65 ... '66?

ALVIN
'66.

Danny is looking under the hood. He notices a small pool of oil forming under the mower.

DANNY RIORDAN
Well I can tell you right now Alvin you won't be going anywhere tonight. Aside from your drive belt being busted, you've got transmission problems. Where were you hoping to get to?

ALVIN
Mount Zion.

DARLA RIORDAN
Mount Zion, Wisconsin? Past Prairie du Chien?

JOHNNY JOHNSON
That's 60 more miles of hills.

DANNY RIORDAN
That's across the Mississippi. What's in
Mount Zion Alvin?

ALVIN
My brother lives there.

JANET
Why didn't you take your car?

ALVIN
Don't have a driver's license.

DARLA RIORDAN
Couldn't your brother come to visit
you?

ALVIN
He's had a bad stroke.

VERLYN
Where are you coming from?

ALVIN
Back a piece.

DANNY RIORDAN
West Union?

ALVIN
Nope.

JOHNNY JOHNSON
Hawkeye?

Alvin just shakes his head.

DARLA RIORDAN
Not New Hampton. You didn't come
that far?

Alvin gets a small smile.

ALVIN
Nope.

Janet jumps in thinking she's got it.

JANET (cont'd)
Mason City!

Alvin shakes his head again.

VERLYN
You've come a long way haven't you?

Alvin looks at Verlyn and nods.

ALVIN
Yes I have. From Laurens, Iowa.

DARLA RIORDAN
Laurens?

VERLYN
That's west of the Grotto. How long
have you been on the road?

ALVIN

What's the date today?

JOHNNY JOHNSON

October 8th.

Alvin thinks for a minute. Counts on his fingers.
Looks up.

ALVIN

5 weeks. I left Laurens on September
5th.

DANNY RIORDAN

You been bunking in that?

Alvin points his thumb over his shoulder at the trailer.

ALVIN

That's my rolling home.

They all swing their heads and look again at the
trailer. Darla and Janet look at each other. They
share a "Holy Cow" look.

DANNY RIORDAN

Where've you been settin' up camp?

ALVIN

In the fields. I'd just pull off the road
every evening. I don't travel at night.

DARLA RIORDAN

Weren't you scared staying out there
alone at night? There's a lot of strange
people everywhere now.

ALVIN

Ma'am, I fought in the trenches in World War II. Why should I be scared in an Iowa cornfield?

DANNY RIORDAN

Well why don't you bivouac right here in our yard tonight? We got a bathroom out here in this garage you can use.

ALVIN

I appreciate that. I believe this machine is in agreement with you.

CUT TO:

A130 EXT.—LATE AFTERNOON RIORDAN'S YARD

A130

Alvin, Danny and Darla are rigging up a lean-to of plastic tarp and tree limbs. The lean-to extends out from the garage.

ALVIN

Sure is nice of you folks to help me with this.

DANNY RIORDAN

Well...there's a lot of rain in the forecast and you don't want to be stuck in your trailer.

Darla is on a stepladder attaching a red wooden fish to the top of the post.

DARLA

I do a little woodwork art. I thought you might like some fish on your tent.

ALVIN
My daughter Rose builds birdhouses.

DARLA AND DANNY
(in unison)
Oh that's nice.

130 EXT.—NIGHT RIORDAN'S BACKYARD 130

Alvin is perched in the doorway of his trailer smoking a Swisher Sweet.

CUT TO:

131 EXT.—NIGHT ALVIN'S POV: BURNT OUT
HOUSE 131

Alvin is gazing out into the night. He looks over at the smoldering house. A few orange embers in the ashes and one fireman on watch. The fireman lights a cigarette.

CUT TO:

132 EXT.—NIGHT ALVIN'S POV: RIORDAN'S
HOUSE 132

Lights turn out one after another.

CUT TO:

133 EXT.—NIGHT ALVIN'S POV: THE SKY 133

The stars and the moon in a beautiful clear autumn (still dark blue) sky.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

134 EXT.—DAY RIORDAN'S BACKYARD 134

Four men are standing around looking at Alvin's mower: Danny, Alvin and two guys from the local

John Deere dealer. HARALD AND THORVALD OLSEN (they are both tall and skinny with big adam's apples. They have bright blue eyes and very ruddy red cheeks. They are prematurely bald). They are twin brothers and bicker like an old married couple. Can't agree on anything.

HARALD

I tell you Thorvald it's a '65 John Deere 110.

THORVALD

It's a '66 Harald. I fixed one just like it three years ago. That was a drive belt too.

HARALD

'65.

THORVALD

'66!

DANNY RIORDAN (TO ALVIN)

They're twins. Siamese, separated at the opinion.

Alvin chuckles.

DANNY RIORDAN (cont'd)

It's a '66. Ask Mr. Straight.

They both look to Alvin. Each of them still sure they're right.

ALVIN

'66.

Harald kicks the ground. Thorvald smirks. Blows his nails and shines them on his shirt.

DANNY RIORDAN
So Olsens. How bad is it?

ALVIN
I can't be dawdlin' here. I gotta get back on the road.

The twins look at the lawn mower and then at each other. Thorvald turns back to Alvin who is waiting expectantly.

THORVALD
Well you know about the transmission. The belt is shot, you blew a head gas-get, you're in bad need of oil, and your right side tires are bald.

Alvin takes this in.

ALVIN
Is that all?

HARALD
Well it wouldn't be a bad idea to remove the blade assembly...As best as I can tell ...you're not mowin' any lawns.

CUT TO:

135 INT.—DAY RIORDAN'S KITCHEN. 135

Darla is kneading bread. She is up to her elbows in dough. Danny walks in, grabs a beer from the fridge and sits down at the kitchen table. He lights a cigarette. There is a small TV on the kitchen counter. The Weather Channel is on.

DARLA

Storm rollin' in.

Danny sits lost in thought. He doesn't react to her.

DANNY RIORDAN

It's going to cost him a bundle to fix that mower. I don't think he's got that kinda money.

DARLA

Mmmm.

DANNY

I wouldn't drive that old thing to Excelsior. It's a lawn mower for god's sake.

DARLA

Mmm Hmmm.

DANNY

He was damn lucky he made it to the bottom of that hill. He could've been killed. Easily coulda' been killed.

DARLA

Yah. Ah huh.

DANNY RIORDAN

He's none too strong. Did you see how he can't walk without those canes?

DARLA RIORDAN

(still kneading)

Uh uh.

DANNY RIORDAN

The hills just get worse the closer you
get to the Mississippi.

Darla stops kneading her bread and smiles. With
dough up to her elbows she walks over to Danny
and kisses him on the forehead.

DARLA

Go ahead and drive him honey. Mt.
Zion can't be a half day. That's fine.

Darla goes back to her dough as Danny keeps think-
ing.

DARLA (cont'd)

....You're a good man Danny Riordan
....That's why I married you despite
what my mother said.

Danny smiles, gets up from the chair and stands
behind Darla.

DARLA (cont'd)

Now shoo.

CUT TO:

136 EXT.—DAY RIORDAN'S BACKYARD

136

Alvin is sitting in the open door of his trailer. He
looks around to make sure he is alone. He pulls out
his wallet and looks inside.

CUT TO:

137 EXT.—DAY RIORDAN'S BACKYARD 137

Alvin's POV of inside of wallet. A couple of twenties and a ten and a few singles.

CUT TO:

138 EXT.—AFTERNOON RIORDAN'S BACKYARD 138

Alvin closes up wallet, puts it in his pocket. He lights up a Swisher Sweet and gets pensive.

CUT TO:

139 EXT.—DAY BACK DOOR RIORDAN'S HOUSE 139

Alvin knocks on door. Danny comes to the door.

ALVIN

I'm in need of a phone.

DANNY RIORDAN

Why sure...come on in.

ALVIN

I'd like to call my daughter and give her an account of my recent travels.

DANNY RIORDAN

Sure, sure. Come on in.

He opens the door wide to allow Alvin past.

ALVIN

If it's all the same to you I was wondering if you have one of those phones without a cord.

DANNY RIORDAN

The door's wide open...come on in.

ALVIN

I can talk from out here.

Danny smiles, goes back in and returns with a portable phone.

DANNY RIORDAN (cont'd)

Here you go. You're more than welcome to sit down at the kitchen table. Darla and I can leave the room if you're lookin' for a little privacy.

ALVIN

Thank you. Out here's just fine.

Alvin turns and starts to hobble away. Danny is starting to shut the door. Alvin turns back to him.

ALVIN

What area code am I in? I don't think this is 712 anymore.

DANNY RIORDAN

No it isn't Alvin, that hill rolled you into 319. You'll need to dial a one and your area code to get her.

ALVIN

I thank you.

CUT TO:

The phone is ringing. Rose enters kitchen carrying a birdhouse. She picks up the phone.

R O S E

Dad? Oh dad...I'm...(she starts to tear up)...so glad to hear you.

R O S E (cont'd)

I been so worried. I know....you can....O.K. I won't.

R O S E (cont'd)

Clermont? Is that.....in Iowa?....Oh.

R O S E (cont'd)

Yah. Oh...your social security check...yah.....it's here.

R O S E (cont'd)

O.K....the check.....I send it to you.....O.K.

R O S E (cont'd)

Yes....I will....take it down....hold on.....Dad.

She puts the phone down, puts down the birdhouse which she has been holding through the conversation. She rummages through a drawer in the kitchen. No luck. She moves stuff around the coun-

tertops. No luck. She moves out of the kitchen and we hear her rummaging in the other room.

CUT TO:

141 EXT.—DAY RIORDAN'S BACKYARD 141

Alvin is patiently sitting at a picnic table. A little smile comes across his face.

CUT TO:

142 INT.—DAY THE STRAIGHT KITCHEN 142

Rose comes back into the kitchen with a big smile on her face holding a fat carpenter's pencil. She picks the phone back up.

ROSE (cont'd)

O.K. Dad...I have apencil. It's one of those ones you use when you're building stuff.

She concentrates and writes for what seems a long time.

ROSE (cont'd)

I'm going to read.....it back.

CUT TO:

143 EXT.—DAY RIORDAN'S BACK YARD 143

Alvin, phone to his ear, nods several times as Rose haltingly reads back the address.

ALVIN

That's right. I know I can count on you sweetheart.....I'm fine. I'm hobbled here but as soon as I get that check I can head out to Lyle's.....Are you

O.K. there alone?..... Good, we can't
have too many bluebirds in the yard.

CUT TO:

144 EXT.—DAY RIORDAN'S BACK PORCH 144

Close up Alvin sets the phone down on a few dollars
on the porch.

CUT TO:

145 EXT.—DAY RIORDAN'S BACKYARD 145

Danny's POV. He comes out the door and watches
Alvin hobbling back to his trailer.

CUT TO:

146 EXT.—DAY RIORDAN'S BACK PORCH 146

Danny stoops and picks up the phone and money.
He takes a look at Alvin and goes back in the house.

CUT TO:

147 EXT.—DAY RIORDAN'S BACKYARD. 147

Alvin settles into the doorway of his trailer. Lights
up a Swisher Sweet.

DISSOLVE TO:

148 EXT.—DAY RIORDAN'S BACKYARD 148

A Coleman cookstove is fired up and has a large pot
of water boiling on top of it.

CUT TO:

149 EXT.—DAY RIORDAN'S BACKYARD 149

Alvin is stretched out on his chaise lounge. He is
watching the water boil. Danny approaches.

DANNY

What are ya cookin' Alvin?

ALVIN

I'm making my Mexican coffee.

DANNY

Mind if I join you?

ALVIN

You'd be a guest in your own yard.

Danny goes off, comes back with an aluminium folding chair and sets it up next to Alvin's chaise lounge.

DANNY

I talked to the Olsen twins and they estimate it will cost you around \$250.00 to get this mower running again.

ALVIN

That's twice what it oughta be. Must be because they're twins.

Danny smiles at this.

DANNY

You know I'd be happy to drive you the rest of the way to Mount Zion.

Alvin starts shaking his head.

DANNY (cont'd)

It'd be a nice Sunday drive for me and Darla. We enjoy crossing the river. Especially with the trees in color.

ALVIN

I appreciate the offer friend. I'd like to finish this my own way.

DANNY RIORDAN

Even if you fix your mower there are hills bigger than Clermont's between here and Zion. There's no guarantee that your machine won't break down again. In fact I'll guarantee it will. Alvin, this machine was meant to go across a lawn, not the state of Iowa.

ALVIN

You're a kind man talkin' to a stubborn man. This is a trip I'd like to finish.

Danny resigns to Alvin's decision. Lights up a cigarette.

DANNY RIORDAN

Well then let me give you a loan for the repairs.

ALVIN

Well that is generous. And if I needed that help I'd take it. But I phoned to have money sent to me. I gave my daughter your address. I hope that's O.K.

Danny knows better than to argue with the proud man about money.

DANNY

Well then Alvin you'll stay right here in our yard until you're ready to go. We enjoy your company.

ALVIN

I'm thankful for that.

Danny is satisfied with this arrangement and sits back to enjoy the fine afternoon. They both sit and smoke contentedly listening to the honking of a passing flock of Canadian geese.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

150 INT.—DAY THE RIORDAN'S YARD ALVIN'S TRAILER

150

Alvin is sitting in his trailer with the door open. Suddenly Darla and Janet pop their heads into either side of the door opening and quickly pull back.

DARLA

(v.o.)

Oh excuse us Alvin. We were just looking for you.

ALVIN

(smiling)

Well you found me. It's alright ladies, I'm decent.

The two heads pop back into either side of the frame of the door.

DARLA

Well we had some brownies we thought
you might enjoy.

Janet extends a plate of brownies.

DARLA RIORDAN (cont'd)

Janet makes the best brownies in
Fayette county. She wins a prize for
them every year at the county fair.

Janet is very embarrassed by this.

JANET

My mother's recipe.

DARLA RIORDAN

She won't tell anyone what the secret
ingredient is.

Janet shakes her head. No way.

151 INT.—DAY ALVIN'S TRAILER

151

Alvin graciously accepts the plate.

ALVIN

Thank you Janet. Very much. I'll let
'em cool down a little...can't eat hot
food. But I sure have a sweet tooth. I
love brownies. Haven't had any since I
went on the road. My daughter Rose
makes a pretty good brownie.

JANET

Does she live in Laurens?

ALVIN

Yes. She lives with me. Just the two of us.

JANET

Oh.

Everyone is quiet for a bit. Alvin is holding the plate and the two women's heads are just hanging there. Darla shakes herself.

DARLA RIORDAN

Well we'll be moving along. We just wanted to make sure you're doing O.K. Anything you need?

ALVIN

No, thank you kindly.

DARLA RIORDAN

Well don't you be afraid to ask now.

ALVIN

I'm doing just fine. Thanks again.

The ladies disappear from view. Alvin moves out of

the trailer and perches in the open door. Just then a pickup truck pulls into the yard and Verlyn emerges from the cab. As he approaches Alvin, both men watch the women walk into the rear of the Riordan house. Verlyn reaches the trailer with a smile on his face.

VERLYN

Janet give you a plate of her brownies?

Alvin chuckles at this and reaches behind him into the trailer. He pulls out the plate of brownies. He holds it out to Verlyn.

VERLYN (cont'd)

Well how about that timing. Janet makes...

Alvin joins in and they say in unison

VERLYN (cont'd) ALVIN

...the best brownies in Fayette county.

VERLYN (cont'd)

She wins a prize every year at the county fair.

He reaches and takes a brownie off the plate.

ALVIN

Her mother's recipe.

VERLYN

(munching)

Chocolate chips.

ALVIN

Huh?

VERLYN

The secret ingredient...no one's supposed to know....chocolate chips.

Alvin takes a brownie too and the two men enjoy the delicious experience together. There is a brief, comfortable silence between them.

ALVIN (cont'd)

You've had enough rain this summer, have ya?

VERLYN

Put up third crop hay last week.

ALVIN

Dairy farm?

VERLYN

Beef. I got too old for milking and both my sons moved to Dubuque.

ALVIN

I worked cattle in Montana. Back when it was all by horse. Before the war.

VERLYN

Army?

ALVIN (ALVIN LOOKS OFF)

Infantry. Third Corps.

VERLYN

Under Bradley. I was Second Corps.

Another silence. Alvin offers Verlyn a Swisher Sweet.
Verlyn accepts.

VERLYN (cont'd)

I been out on errands and I'm headin'
for a beer. I thought you might like to
join me.

Alvin ponders the offer briefly.

ALVIN

I don't drink no more but I'm always
up for a change of scenery. Thanks.

The two older men, both with troubled hips, head
for Verlyn's truck.

155 I/E.—DAY VERLYN'S TRUCK CLERMONT 155

Alvin enjoying the ride. Alvin leans out the window
to look at the road flying by.

CUT TO:

156 EXT.—DAY ALVIN'S POV. 156

The road is flying by.

CUT TO:

157 I/E.—DAY VERLYN'S TRUCK 157

ALVIN

Sittin' a little higher and goin' a little
faster.

VERLYN

Wait'll I get 'er over thirty.

They both chuckle.

CUT TO:

158 INT.—DAY CLERMONT BAR

158

Alvin and Verlyn at the bar. The Weather Channel is on the television over the bar. There are some local farmers in the place. There is a cribbage board at a table. Old timers are slapping cards on the table. Verlyn is drinking beer. Alvin is having a glass of milk.

VERLYN

I can still have my beer but I can't
drink the brown stuff anymore.

Alvin nods with understanding at this comment.

ALVIN

I picked up a mournful taste for liquor
in France. (shaking his head)

When I came back I couldn't drink
enough of it. I wasn't worth a stick of
stove wood. Mean. A preacher helped
put some distance between me and the
bottle. He helped me see that I was
drinkin' because some of the sights I
was still seein' from over there.

Verlyn nods. Takes a sip of beer. Looks straight
ahead at the back bar.

VERLYN

Lot of men came back drinking hard.
My brother Dewey did that. Spent
most of his adult life drinking from

noon on. He was an awful sweet drunk though.

Alvin takes this in. Nods quietly.

ALVIN

Everyone trying to forget. I can see it still in a man right away.

Verlyn looks quickly at Alvin.

VERLYN

Yup.

ALVIN

It was one hard day after another hard day all strung together.

VERLYN

Yeah.

The bartender comes over. Verlyn orders another. The bartender looks to Alvin who is nursing his glass of milk.

ALVIN

No, I'm good thanks.

The bartender moves down the bar. Alvin and Verlyn sit in silence. Verlyn is peeling the label off of his long neck bottle. He is really concentrating on this process.

VERLYN

There was this one time....We were just ...waiting on our first warm meal in ten days.

Verlyn looks up quickly at Alvin in the mirror on the back bar to see how he's reacting. Alvin just looks into his milk glass but doesn't stop him.

VERLYN (cont'd)

...We thought we'd seen the worst.
They hadn't given us much trouble
from the air.

Verlyn takes another drink of beer. He stops working on the label. He looks straight ahead at the back bar.

VERLYN

I was on a rise with the quartermaster
working on more coffee for me and my
buddies. A stray Focke-Wolf comes
over the treetops and drops an incendi-
ary right on the mess tent...all my bud-
dies...

The Kraut banks right in front of me
on that hill and.....I can (he pauses and
the memory becomes the present) see
the Iron Cross...(suddenly unable to
speak...he tries in a choked
voice)....right in front of me (composes
himself, shaking his head)....

There is silence. Alvin gives Verlyn time to set himself.

VERLYN (cont'd)

Then I look...I couldn't tell which of
my buddies it was burnin' up down
there.

Verlyn can barely finish his story. Alvin is very still and quiet. Verlyn has collected himself and looks quietly to the mirror of the back bar.

VERLYN (cont'd)

“...Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,

Where ignorant armies clash by night.”

Verlyn looks down, slightly embarrassed at his speech. Alvin thinks about what he's heard. He starts with his own story.

ALVIN

There is a thing I can't let loose..... All my buddies faces are still young...

The spirit of the thing is that the more years I have... the more they lost.

And... it's not always a buddy's face I'm seein'. Sometimes its a German face. By the end we were shooting moon-faced boys....

Alvin takes a sip of milk and draws a deep breath.

ALVIN (cont'd)

I was a sniper. The way I grew up...you learn how to shoot huntin' for food.

Alvin stops. He's not sure if he's going to continue.

ALVIN (cont'd)

They'd post me up front, damn near ahead of the line. I'd sit still forever.

Amazin' thing what you can see just sittin'. I'd look for the officers...or their radio guy or artillery spotter... Sometimes I'd sight a gun nest by the smoke and fire into that. Sometimes it was just movement in the woods.

Alvin pauses.

A L V I N (cont'd)

We had a scout. Small guy. Name of Kotz. He was a Polish fella from Milwaukee. He would always take recon and he was good. We went by his word and he saved our skins more'n once. A short fella.

Alvin sets both hands palm down on the bar. He looks hard at his hands.

A L V I N (cont'd)

We had broken out of the hedgerows...made a run across the open when we come upon a woods an' started drawin' fire. I took my usual spot. I saw some movement real slow like. I waited for ten minutes and it moved again. I fired. The movement stopped. We found Kotz the next day. Head shot. He had been movin' back toward our lines. Everyone in the unit thought he was taken by a German sniper...everyone all these years. Everyone but me.

Alvin and Verlyn sit real quiet for a while. Verlyn shifts on his stool...shakes his head.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

159 EXT.—NIGHT RIORDAN'S HOUSE 159

Alvin is sitting in his chaise lounge having a smoke. It is night time and he is sitting without a fire in the dark.

CUT TO:

160 EXT.—NIGHT ALVIN'S POV OF THE SKY 160

A crisp, star-filled sky.

CUT TO:

161 EXT.—NIGHT RIORDAN'S HOUSE 161

Alvin looking up at the stars...pain in his face.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

162 EXT.—DAY DANNY RIORDAN'S BACKYARD 162

Danny and the two Olsen brothers are fixing the mower. Alvin looks on.

HARALD

You can work all day and you won't get that piece off with that wrench.

THORVALD

(from beneath the mower)

Danny, did you hear me ask Wisenheimer there for his advice on how to fix a riding mower?

H A R A L D

Fine. Then we'll all just stand here and wait for Mr. Wizard to finish...Anyone got a deck a cards?

T H O R V A L D

(still beneath)

Very funny Harald. If it was you underneath here we could all go home and wait for winter. Then we could just put the snowplow on this rig.

D A N N Y R I O R D A N

Jeez you two can bitch. I heard you about killed each other last week over horseshoes at the Dew Drop.

Harald gets a mad look on his face.

T H O R V A L D

(up from beneath)

See Harald...brainiac...I got the mower assembly free with this little old wrench here you said wouldn't work...Well I'd say it worked pretty good, wouldn't you? Help me slide'er out here and we can settle up.

They slide out the mower assembly. Thorvald steps back, wiping the oil off his hands. Harald is pulling out the bill. He reads off of it.

H A R A L D

I got the labor and parts coming to \$247.80.

He hands the bill to Alvin. Alvin scans it. He looks up at them.

ALVIN

That's a little heavy for light work.

The Olsen brothers are a little taken aback by this. Alvin moves over to the mower and starts a slow circle around it.

ALVIN (cont'd)

Now I got old man's eyes...

He reaches down and runs his hand along the treads of the tires.

ALVIN (cont'd)

...but I was noticin' these new tires.....

Danny is starting to enjoy himself. He crosses his arms and smiles at the Olsens.

HARALD

Well now we did take them off of a resell, but the treads are good.

Alvin, still caressing the treads gives him a long look from under the brim of his Stetson.

ALVIN

Friend, are you chargin' me good or are you chargin' me new?

HARALD

Uh, (turns to his brother) Thorvald?

THORVALD

Well I guess we can make an adjustment there.

Danny pulls up a lawn chair and lights a cigarette.
Hunkers down for the entertainment.

ALVIN

I figure that adjustment to be about \$30.00? Is that what your pencil's sayin'?

DANNY RIORDAN

Sounds right to me.

The twins give Danny a dirty look.

ALVIN

Now about that labor. I'm agreeable that you boys have put some real time in on this job. But a man's gotta ask when he workin' with twins, especially a bickerin' pair, how much workin' was fightin'.

DANNY RIORDAN

You got that right.

THORVALD AND HARALD (IN UNISON)

Shut up Danny.

ALVIN

If I were to judge from the joyous affair I've seen today I would calculate a 20% discount on the labor charge.

Thorvald and Harald exchange a look

THORVALD

Anything else mister.

ALVIN

Now I'm not from these parts exactly
but where I come from this is a mighty
rich charge on a can of Iowa oil.

Thorvald and Harald can not believe this old fart.

THORVALD

Take the oil. No charge.

ALVIN

Well that's a splendid offer that I very
much appreciate. Now what's your tally?

Danny turns grinning to the twins. They are slightly
befuddled.

HARALD

Uh...uh.

Looking at Thorvald who shrugs.

HARALD (cont'd)

...uh...\$180.00 even?

ALVIN

Done.

Sticks out his hand which each of the twins takes
in confusion. Alvin brings out the money, and pays
the twins. They see that he has 4 c-notes in his
wallet.

A L V I N (cont'd)

Now it's thanks to you boys that I can
get back on the road.

Alvin stuffs the change in his wallet and puts the
wallet back in his pocket.

A L V I N (cont'd)

I drove this rig across Iowa. I'm hopin'
it'll hold into Wisconsin...

Alvin looks up at them.

A L V I N (cont'd)

...that's where my brother lives. Haven't
seen him in ten years.

Alvin looks at the Olsen brothers. They squirm
under his gaze.

No man knows your life better than a
brother near your age. He can know
who, and what you are best than most
anyone on the earth.

He stops for a moment. Looks hard at the Olsens.

A L V I N (cont'd)

My brother and I said some unforgiv-
able things last time we were together. I
want to put those times behind us.
This trip is just one hard swallow of
pride. I'm only hopin' I'm not too late.

They make to gather their tools and leave.

A L V I N (cont'd)

A brother's a brother.

Danny smiles at this. The Olsens move to get out of there as fast as they can.

CUT TO:

163 EXT.—NIGHT DANNY RIORDAN'S BACK-YARD. 163

Alvin is cooking up a large jug of water for coffee. Danny is sitting in the chair watching Alvin and smoking a cigarette. He has come to enjoy his time out in the backyard with Alvin.

DANNY RIORDAN

I've gotta tell you Alvin that I'm worried about you. About you...about your trip on that mower.

ALVIN

Not to worry. Me and my machine are in splendid form after our stay here.

DANNY RIORDAN

You're sure are you Alvin?

Alvin just nods. A somewhat awkward silence settles on the scene.

DANNY RIORDAN

Well.

Little more silence. Danny puts out his cigarette.

DANNY RIORDAN (cont'd)

I guess I'll be turning in. See you in the morning then before you go.

ALVIN

I'll be traveling plenty early.

Alvin takes off his hat and stands directly in front of Danny.

ALVIN (cont'd)

I want to thank you for your kindness
to a stranger.

Danny stands up from his chair and puts out his hand.

DANNY RIORDAN

It has been a genuine pleasure having
you here Alvin. Write to us sometime.

Alvin takes his hand in a firm shake.

CUT TO:

164 EXT.—EARLY MORNING DANNY RIORDAN'S
BACKYARD 164

Tight on door of trailer closing. Alvin comes around
and gets on the mower and starts her up.

165 EXT.—SUNRISE DANNY RIORDAN'S HOUSE
165

Danny is standing at a window unseen by Alvin. He
has been watching Alvin's preparations from inside
the house, sensing Alvin's reluctance for goodbyes.
Alvin pulls out onto the road.

CUT TO:

166 EXT.—SUNRISE RIORDAN'S FRONT PORCH 166

Danny steps out onto the porch, holding a coffee
mug. He watches Alvin in the distance heading
down the main drag of Clermont.

CUT TO:

167 EXT.—SUNRISE MAIN DRAG CLERMONT 167

Traveling shot of Alvin going through a sleeping Clermont. The only vehicle on the road is another John Deere tractor. Alvin and the farmer exchange the farmer wave.

CUT TO:

168 EXT.—DAY A HILL JUST WEST OF THE MISSISSIPPI 168

Shot of empty road, top of the hill. The trees on either side of the road are in full fall color. Alvin and the mower rise into view. Then he stops and eyes the steep downhill grade. He sets his hat and starts down.

CUT TO:

169 EXT.—DAY ANOTHER HILL JUST WEST OF THE MISSISSIPPI 169

Alvin again crests a hill. This one a bit bigger. Again he takes a deep breath. He lashes down the gear shift and heads down the hill.

CUT TO:

170 EXT.—DAY THE LAST HILL LEADING DOWN TO THE MISSISSIPPI 170

Alvin pulls up to the top of a big hill and comes to a stop.

171 EXT.—DAY HILL TOP ABOVE THE MISSISSIPPI 171

Close up of Alvin looking and taking off his hat.

CUT TO:

172 EXT.—DAY SAME HILL TOP ALVIN'S POV. 172

The beautiful, broad Mississippi stretches out before him. The hills are in full autumn foliage. There is river as far as the eye can see. It is dotted with boats and barges. Directly across from Alvin, the Wisconsin River flows into the Mississippi the sun glints off their surface where they join. Alvin secures his hat and gets back out on the road.

CUT TO:

173 EXT.—DAY TOP OF LAST HILL WEST OF MISSISSIPPI 173

OMIT

174 EXT.—DAY SAME HILL 174

OMIT

175 EXT.—DAY MACGREGOR IOWA 175

OMIT

176 EXT.—DAY HIGHWAY LEADING TO THE BRIDGE. 176

As he approaches the bridge over the river, Alvin has to pull move off the shoulder and into the slow lane of traffic. He begins his crossing.

CUT TO:

177 EXT.—DAY HIGH ANGLE SHOT OF ALVIN ON BRIDGE 177

Alvin is tooling along in the slow lane. The landscape around the bridge is breathtaking. Cars and trucks pass him. A car tailgates him. Traffic behind him begins to build.

178 EXT.—DAY MISSISSIPPI BRIDGE 178

Alvin riding on his mower, enjoying the view at his

nice, slow pace. The mower's pace allows him to enjoy the scene. People in cars and trucks pass and gawk in disbelief. A few are irritated. Some kids take his picture. One child motions for him to blow his air horn.

179 EXT.—DAY HIGH ANGLE SHOT OF ALVIN ON BRIDGE 179

Alvin at mid-point of the span. The number of cars backed up behind him has increased. The flow of cars in adjacent lane become affected by the gawkers. Alvin has no idea that he is now a one man traffic jam.

180 EXT.—DAY MISSISSIPPI 180

Alvin on his mower. He is oblivious to the traffic behind him. He is really enjoying the view of the Mississippi.

181 EXT.—DAY HIGH ANGLE OF ALVIN ON BRIDGE 181

Now there is a serious back up behind Alvin. He is 3/4 of the way across the bridge and cars are backed up 1/2 way back.

182 EXT.—DAY ALVIN'S POV 182

Alvin scans the river but as his view moves past the "WELCOME TO WISCONSIN" sign...

183 EXT.—DAY ALVIN'S FACE TIGHT 183

...his expression changes from blissful tourist to concerned motorist.

184 EXT.—DAY ALVIN POV 184

Next to the welcome sign Alvin's sees a Prairie du

Chien police officer leaning against his squad, lights revolving.

185 EXT.—DAY PRAIRIE DU CHIEN, WISCONSIN 185

As Alvin approaches the officer waves him to the side of the road. Alvin slows to a stop along the shoulder. The police officer begins to direct the cars past around Alvin, moving the gawkers along. He begins to converse with Alvin over his shoulder as he waves.

PRAIRIE DU CHIEN COP

Sir, are you aware of the congestion you caused on the bridge just now?

ALVIN

I wasn't.

PRAIRIE DU CHIEN COP

I am assuming sir that you have the appropriate registration to operate a Slow Moving Vehicle. Am I correct?

ALVIN

Yes sir.

PRAIRIE DU CHIEN COP

And where are you headed today?

ALVIN

Mt. Zion.

At this the police officer stops directing traffic and walks over to Alvin with an incredulous look on his face.

PRAIRIE DU CHIEN COP

You are going to drive that to Mt.
Zion? The Mt. Zion by Boscobel?

ALVIN

Boscobel?

PRAIRIE DU CHIEN COP

The Mt. Zion by Blue River?

That Mt. Zion?

ALVIN

That Mt. Zion ...yes.

PRAIRIE DU CHIEN COP

May I see some identification please?

Alvin extracts his wallet and chain and hands over
an ID.

PRAIRIE DU CHIEN COP (cont'd)

It says here you're from Laurens. That
is ...?

ALVIN

A bit west of the Grotto.

PRAIRIE DU CHIEN COP

And you've made it to Wisconsin with
this setup?

ALVIN

I have.

The cop stands back and takes in the whole rig:
lawnmower, plywood trailer, antlers.

PRAIRIE DU CHIEN COP
(amazed)

It says here Mr. Straight that you are 73
years old. How long have you been on
the road from Laurens.

ALVIN
Goin' on six weeks.

PRAIRIE DU CHIEN COP
And what's your business in Mt. Zion?

ALVIN
My brother is sick.

The cop considers this for a moment.

PRAIRIE DU CHIEN COP
Well Mr. Straight, we've got a problem
here. All of this traffic that you've man-
aged to stop runs right on through
downtown Prairie du Chien. I'd like
you to take the side streets.

ALVIN
Well I'd like to accommodate you
but...I'm afraid I'm not familiar with
the streets in this town.

PRAIRIE DU CHIEN COP

You stay right here Mr. Straight. Don't move.

Alvin nods. The officer walks back to his squad and begins talking in the radio. Alvin sits and watches the river and the traffic. A car goes by and a dog barks at him from a window. Little children stare at him as they pass. The officer returns. He notices again the deer antlers mounted on the trailer.

PRAIRIE DU CHIEN COP (cont'd)

Do you have a hunting license?

Alvin turns and sees he's looking at the antlers.

ALVIN

That was a road kill.

Another Prairie du Chien squad car pulls up lights flashing.

PRAIRIE DU CHIEN COP (cont'd)

Mr. Straight, I'd like you to follow me.

ALVIN

Are you arresting me?

PRAIRIE DU CHIEN COP

No sir....we're escorting you.

The two squads bracket Alvin and move out into traffic. The caravan drives through the side streets of town. The squad cars have their red lights flashing. A state patrol car joins the procession. Locals look

on in confusion and amusement. They wave and Alvin, a regular parade marshall, waves back.

CUT TO:

186 EXT.—DAY EASTERN EDGE OF PRAIRIE DU
CHIEN 186

The lead police car stops. The other cars wave and peel away. The officer from the bridge walks over to Alvin on the mower.

PRAIRIE DU CHIEN COP

You take this up as far as 61, head north and it'll take you straight into Mt. Zion. Have a safe journey, Mr. Straight.

ALVIN

Thank you for the grand parade.

PRAIRIE DU CHIEN COP

Our privilege sir.

He turns to walk away, then looks back.

PRAIRIE DU CHIEN COP (cont'd)

Must've been one slow buck.

Alvin sits grinning on his rig, his head framed by the buck's antlers.

CUT TO:

187a EXT.—SUNSET 187a

Alvin traveling along the Wisconsin country road.

187b EXT.—SUNSET

187b

Alvin pulls off the road to set up camp alongside a small country church and cemetery.

187 EXT.—NIGHT ALVIN'S CAMPSITE

187

Alvin sits in his chaise by the campfire. A train whistle sounds in the distance. Alvin looks up, and looks into the sky.

188 EXT.—NIGHT ALVIN'S POV

188

Stars in the cool autumn sky with a crescent moon. The train whistle blows again.

189 EXT.—NIGHT

189

Alvin looks off in the direction of the sound. His trip is nearing an end. He looks around at his surroundings.

190 EXT.—NIGHT ALVIN'S POV

190

He is camped alongside a small country church and cemetery. A simple iron archway guards the cemetery. The back door of the church opens and a swath of light cuts into the cemetery. A PRIEST in layman's clothes comes out carrying a plate and approaches Alvin.

PRIEST

I noticed your campfire. I brought you some dinner...meat loaf and potatoes.

He holds the plate out to Alvin. Alvin hesitates and then reaches out and takes the plate.

ALVIN

I thank you kindly. Hope you don't mind my trespassin'.

P R I E S T

Not at all. You've made a fine choice.

You're camped next to one of the oldest
cemeteries in the midwest. French
Catholic trappers.

A L V I N

Marquette's party?

P R I E S T

(nodding)

Two of his men.

Alvin reflects on this. He motions for the priest to
sit down by the fire. The priest does so.

P R I E S T (cont'd)

(hesitantly)

I couldn't help but notice your rather
unusual mode of transport.

A L V I N

(shakes his head and smiles)

Well you wouldn't be the first person to
say so Padre.

The priest doesn't say anything...he waits on Alvin.
Finally...

A L V I N (cont'd)

(he's ready to stop explaining himself to people)

I can't see good enough to drive a car, I
don't like someone else drivin' my bus
and I got to get to my brother's place.

P R I E S T

Fair enough. How far have you traveled?

A L V I N

Well now this vehicle doesn't sport an odometer so I couldn't exactly say...but I been on the road since September 5th.

P R I E S T

But we're October 15th. Where in heaven's name did you start out?

A L V I N

Back in north central Iowa. Laurens, Iowa.

P R I E S T

That must be over 300 miles from here!

A L V I N

I reckon that's not a bad guess.

The priest gets up and walks over to Alvin's mower and trailer. He walks around it real slow...one full circle. He comes back and sits down by the fire. He looks at Alvin for a bit.

P R I E S T

Well I would guess that you are on a mission.

This sets Alvin to thinking. He nods to himself.

ALVIN

You know I wouldna ever thought of it that way but I guess you could say that's exactly what I'm doin'.

PRIEST

You say you've got to see your brother. Where is he?

ALVIN

So close I can practically feel him...Mt. Zion.

PRIEST

What's his name?

ALVIN

Lyle Straight.

PRIEST

That the fellow had a stroke some weeks ago?

ALVIN

That's right. You know him?

PRIEST

Well I do some work over at the hospital in Boscobel and I remember him coming in. He caught my attention because he lives in my parish.

ALVIN

He's Baptist.

P R I E S T

I believe he told me that. He told me a few things as a matter of fact. Didn't mention having a brother though.

Alvin looks up to the sky.

A L V I N

Don't think we've either of us had a brother for some time now. I'm hopin' to fix that...

Alvin pauses for a moment.

A L V I N (cont'd)

So you saw him? ...He's O.K. then?

P R I E S T

I only saw him that once...never heard anything more.

There is a pause in the talk. Alvin takes in the scene.

CUT TO:

191 EXT.—NIGHT SKY

191

Alvin's POV of the crescent moon, the stars and down to the church and the cemetery. The priest waits for him to go on. Night sounds, train whistles.

A L V I N

Lyle and I grew up close as brothers could be. We were raised on a farm up in Moorhead, Minnesota. Worked so hard...my ma and pa pretty much killed themselves trying to make that farm work.

Alvin shakes his head at the sorrow of this memory. He takes out a cigar and lights it. The priest patiently waits on him to continue.

ALVIN (cont'd)

Me and Lyle...we made games out of our chores. A day's work'd go quicker when it was just the two of us. We'd make up different races and wagers just to get our mind off the cold...Christ it was cold....

He looks quickly to the priest.

ALVIN (cont'd)

'Scuse me Padre.

The priest nods tolerantly. He waits for Alvin to continue.

ALVIN (cont'd)

He and I used to sleep out in the yard every summer night it wasn't pouring. After nine months of winter we couldn't get enough of summer. We'd bunk down as soon as the sun went down and lie there talkin' ourselves to sleep. Talk about the stars...and other planets, whether there might be other people like us out there, 'bout all the places we wanted to go...made our trials seem smaller. We pretty much talked each other through growin' up.

Alvin looks up to the sky.

CUT TO:

192 EXT.—NIGHT ALVIN'S POV OF THE NIGHT
SKY

192

ALVIN (cont'd)
(voice over)

Funny but lookin' up at these stars
tonight and feelin' him so close...makes
me feel I'm right back there again. All
those years ago.

They are both quiet for a bit...we stay on the night
sky.

PRIEST
(voice over)

What happened between you two?

CUT TO:

193 EXT.—NIGHT CAMPSITE

193

Alvin looks back down to the fire.

ALVIN (cont'd)
Well that's a story old as the
bible...Cain and Abel. Anger...vani-
ty...mix those things up with liquor and
you get two brothers not talkin' for ten
years....

Alvin shakes his head.

ALVIN (cont'd)
It doesn't really matter anymore.

He's quiet for a while.

ALVIN (cont'd)
I've lived on this earth for 73 years. I'm

a humble man in the world but my life
is so full that from where I sit now I'll
be damned if I know how I did it
all...growin' up on a hardscrabble
farm...then went to war...

(he shakes his head at these painful memories)
...God help us.

(he pauses and takes a breath)
I had seven children. We lived in every
part of this beautiful country...I loved a
woman for 40 years...and then she
died.

(he has to stop for a while)
The priest is looking into the fire. He gives Alvin all
the time he needs.

A L V I N (cont'd)
(he takes a breath)

I've got two daughters...one we lost
track of back in '74...don't even know
if she's alive. Got in with a mean fella.

(another painful pause.)

So...whatever it was made me and Lyle
so mad doesn't matter to me now...I
want to make peace...I want to sit with
him again and look up at all the stars.

The priest looks over at Alvin. Alvin looks up and
becomes embarrassed.

P R I E S T
Well sir, I say amen to that.

CUT TO:

194 EXT.—NIGHT ALVIN'S CAMPSITE 194

The hilltop wide under the stars. The fire glows small in the frame. The firelight's flickering illumination of Alvin, the priest, the Church and the cemetery.

SLOW FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

195 EXT.—DAY WESTERN WISCONSIN 195

Alvin is driving through rolling Wisconsin farmland dotted with dairy farms and red barns. He sees a sign: "Mt. Zion. Unincorporated"

CUT TO:

196 INT.—DAY MT. ZION BAR/GAS STATION 196

The bartender sits behind the bar watching the Weather Channel.

CUT TO:

197 INT.—TV SCREEN 197

The weather person is giving the national five day forecast.

WEATHER PERSON

First frost of the season is expected for the midwest and great lakes region...

CUT TO:

198 INT.—DAY MT. ZION BAR 198

Something out the window catches the bartender's eye. He glances out and his expression changes to one of disbelief.

MT. ZION BARTENDER

What the....

He gets up off his stool and walks over to the window for a closer look.

MT. ZION BARTENDER (cont'd)

...hell?

199 INT.—DAY MT. ZION BAR/GAS STATION 199

Through the window we see Alvin hauling up the hill approaching the bar.

200 EXT. —DAY MT. ZION BAR GAS PUMP 200

Alvin arrives at the top of the hill and stops at the gas pumps. Alvin executes his usual laborious dismount and enters the bar.

CUT TO:

201 INT.—DAY THE MT. ZION BAR 201

Alvin crosses the bar and perches atop a bar stool, He sets his canes against the bar rail and addresses the bartender.

ALVIN

I haven't had a drink in years but I believe I'll have a cold beer right now.

MT. ZION BARTENDER

What flavor?

ALVIN

What does a Miller Lite taste like?

The bartender places a bottle in front of Alvin.

MT. ZION BARTENDER

Interesting rig you got out there. Make it up the hill OK ?

ALVIN

That one and about 200 others.

MT. ZION BARTENDER

How far'd you come?

ALVIN

Iowa. Headin' to Lyle Straight's place.

MT. ZION BARTENDER

Iowa?...by God you must be thirsty.

ALVIN

One'll do thank you. Can you point me to Lyle's place. I don't quite recall the way...it's been an awful long time since I seen him.

Alvin starts drinking the beer in short order.

MT. ZION BARTENDER

Cross 61 there on W. Take W to Weed Road and then take Weed on down to Remington. Remington drops down onto S...that's the county trunk by Frankie Schwartz's farm. On your right would be Lyle's place...if he's even there. I heard he's had a bad stroke...if you see him, tell him Micky O'Connor tells him to get better quick.

Alvin finishes off the beer, gets up and heads out of bar. MARTHA, the bartender's wife arrives after Alvin's exit. She peers out the window. Then turns to the bartender.

MARTHA

I believe that would be a '66.

CUT TO:

202 EXT.—DAY MT. ZION BAR 202

Alvin exits and does his departure ritual. Proceeds down the road.

CUT TO:

203 EXT.—DAY EXTERIOR VALLEY HWY W 203

Alvin drives through a beautiful valley.

CUT TO:

204 EXT.—DAY WEED ROAD ALVIN TIGHT 204

Alvin knows that he is near the end of his journey. Then a look crosses his face. We hear the engine cough. Then with a puff of black smoke, the mower dies. Alvin sits alone on the dirt road.

DISSOLVE TO:

205 EXT.—DAY WEED ROAD LATER THAT DAY 205

Alvin is still sitting alone on the dirt road.

DISSOLVE TO:

206 EXT.—DAY WEED ROAD EVEN LATER THAT
SAME DAY 206

Alvin still sitting. We hear the off camera sound of a tractor. Around the bend of the dirt road comes a big John Deere farm tractor.

CUT TO:

207 EXT.—DAY DIRT ROAD WIDE 207

The farmer stops and converses with Alvin. He is offering to haul Alvin. Alvin tries the mower again and to his surprise it starts. The farmer climbs on his tractor and proceeds down the road in front of Alvin. They continue like this approaching Lyle's place. Alvin turns off into Lyle's yard and the tractor keeps moving off. Alvin cuts his engine and the sound of the tractor fades off.

CUT TO:

208 EXT.—MAGIC HOUR LYLE'S FRONT YARD 208

Alvin dismounts and slowly walks toward the front door of the house. He stops in the yard and calls out.

ALVIN

Lyle.

CUT TO:

209 EXT.—MAGIC HOUR LYLE'S HOUSE 209

Close on the screen door. A pause...then we hear Lyle's voice from inside.

LYLE

Is that you Alvin?

We hear a rhythmic bumping noise from inside.

CUT TO:

210 EXT.—MAGIC HOUR LYLE'S YARD 210

Alvin starts moving toward the front porch. Lyle comes out the front door using a walker. It makes the bumping noise. As Alvin climbs the few steps he

and Lyle stand very close and take a good look at each other...at the old men they have become.

LYLE

Sit yourself down Alvin.

They move slowly to the two chairs set up on the porch. They are situated about five feet apart on either side of the screen door. Lyle is on the right and Alvin on the left.

CUT TO:

Lyle looking out at the lawnmower and trailer in the yard.

LYLE (cont'd)

Did you ride that thing all the way here to see me?

CUT TO:

Alvin nodding his head.

ALVIN

I did Lyle.

We stay on Alvin's face for a while.

CUT TO:

Close shot of Lyle. He is crying.

CUT TO:

Alvin...tears are running down his cheeks. He turns with a crying smile to Lyle.

PAN UP TO:

211 EXT.—NIGHT SKY

211

A sky full of stars. Music plays.

The End

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Published to coincide with the Walt Disney Motion Picture, the screenplay to *The Straight Story*, directed by David Lynch and starring Richard Farnsworth, Sissy Spacek, and Harry Dean Stanton.

Based on a true-life journey, *The Straight Story* chronicles 73-year-old Alvin Straight and his travels from Laurens, Iowa, to Mount Zion, Wisconsin, on a 1966 John Deere riding lawnmower. His trip takes him across hundreds of picturesque miles of America's Heartland, into a variety of people's lives, and all the while he shares his simple but poignant insights. Despite crippling arthritis and poor vision, Straight is resolved to travel by his own means to make peace with his ailing brother. His trek and the incidents that he experiences on the road provide a triumphant and inspirational representation of the course of a lifetime as it nears its end.

John Roach heads his own video and film production company. He has been the executive producer of the critically acclaimed cable program *The Sports Writers on TV* for more than a decade.

Mary Sweeney has edited, amongst other films, *Reds*, *Tender Mercies*, *Places in the Heart*, and *Witness*. In addition to *The Straight Story*, she has also edited *My Darling Clementine* and *Way*.



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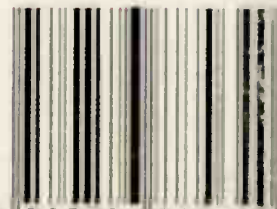
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